

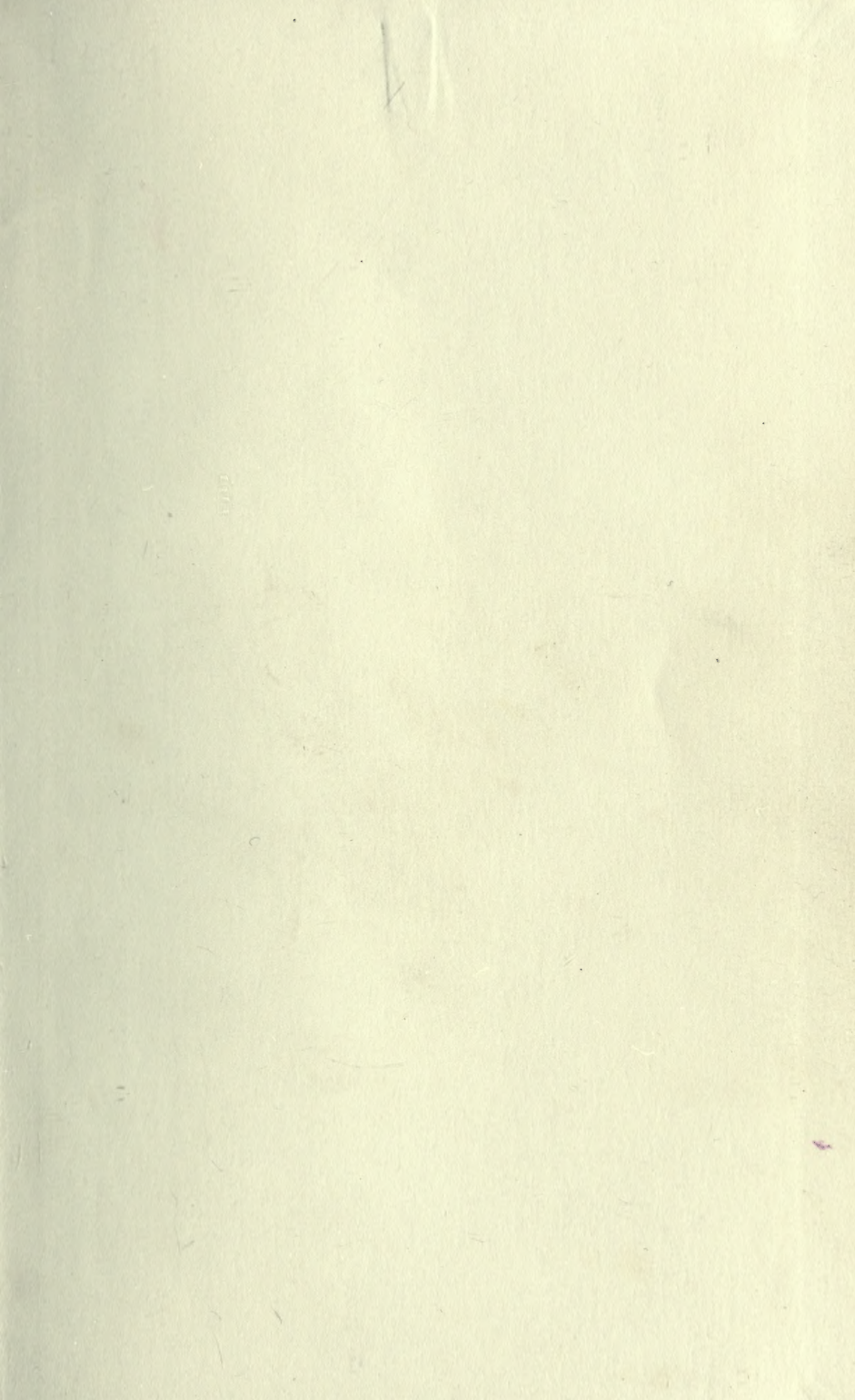
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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THE  
REAL  
TSARITSA





# THE REAL TSARITSA

BY  
MADAME LILI DEHN

CLOSE FRIEND OF THE  
LATE EMPRESS OF RUSSIA

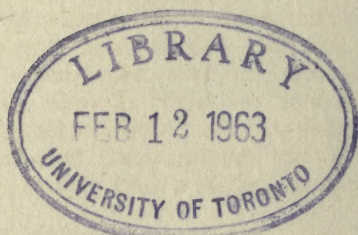


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## TSARKOE SELO

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To

H.I.M. ALEXANDRA

THE LATE EMPRESS OF RUSSIA

*Adieu, c'est pour un autre monde*

The fate which destined thee for lofty power,  
And crowned thee Sovereign o'er an Empire wide,  
Placed too the cup of suffering by thy side  
And sorrow gave thee for imperial dower :  
How little did'st thou dream in Fortune's hour  
Thy barque would founder on such tragic tide  
Of blood as wrecks a mighty nation's pride,  
While black the clouds of Revolution lower !  
What force sustained thee in those days of stress  
When death and ruin held their sombre court,  
And frenzied mob set might all right above ?  
What made thee still thy prayers to Heav'n address,  
And solace to thy stricken spirit brought ?  
'Twas faith unshaken in a God of love.

OSWALD NORMAN.





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## FOREWORD

IN giving to the world my memories of the Empress Alexandra of Russia, I do not wish to pose as one who is biased by a long and intimate friendship. I write of the Tsaritsa as I knew her: the real Tsaritsa. I was not acquainted with the heroine of the films, the hysterical devotee, or the pro-German who, it is asserted, betrayed both her country by adoption and the country which knew her as a granddaughter of Queen Victoria and the daughter of a much loved English Princess.





## Part I—Old Russia



## CHAPTER I

I WAS born on the beautiful estates in South Russia which belonged to my grandmother and my uncle. My father was Ismail Selim Bek Smolsky, whose ancestors hailed from Lithuanian Tartary, and my mother, before her marriage, was Mlle Catherine Horvat, whose grandfather had been invited by the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna to come from Hungary and assist in the colonization of South Russia. Colonel Horvat, who was half Serbian and half Hungarian by birth, was appointed general of the armies of the South by the Empress, and there is a story in our family that when he first arrived in Russia he was taken to the summit of a high mountain and told to look at the panorama of fields and forests lying beneath him.

Colonel Horvat dutifully admired the view, but an unexpected surprise awaited him. "Look well around you, M. le Colonel," said his guide, "the country, as far as you can see, is yours; it is the gift of the Empress!" Truly an Imperial gift, but all that remains of those great possessions are the estates where I was born. These properties were situated on the Dnieper, in the country known as "Little Russia," which in former times was the seat of the Ukranian Government. My forefathers became typical Russian noblemen; they were lavishly generous



where their inclinations were concerned, and it is asserted that one of them once exchanged a large forest for a sporting dog which he especially coveted !

Revovka, my birthplace, was close to the other estates which came into our possession through Prince Goleniktcheff Koutousoff, the hero who saved Russia from falling into the hands of the French. It was a delightful old house, standing in a well-wooded park, with avenues of lime trees where the nightingales sang, and as I write, I can smell the unforgettable perfume of the limes, and recall the beauty and peace of the surroundings ; it was, indeed, a real fairy-land. All was prosperity and happiness at Revovka. The village nestled close to the Great House, and my ancestors were buried in the church. There were rows of little cottages which were whitewashed every week ; the roofs were thatched with reeds, and the gardens were gay with flowers. A cherry tree stood in every garden (cherry trees are typical of South Russia), it was the country of cherry trees, spotless houses and simple joys.

The peasants were on the best of terms with my family, and they regarded my grandmother Horvat as a beneficent deity who replaced the reed roofs when they were destroyed by fire, and who supplied them with unlimited quantities of fuel. They were quite contented, and my grandmother still employed some of the peasants who had once been given to her as serfs. In the old days, it was customary to include a few serfs in a bride's *corbeille*, and the ten peasants who had been chosen to accompany my grandmother

to Revovka adored her. "People say that we were unhappy as serfs," they would often remark, "but we were always well looked after—our landlord and our owner was also our father."

The peasant as master or mistress was invariably a tyrant, and I remember hearing about a beautiful girl who had become the mistress of a great nobleman, and who out-Heroded Herod in her arrogance. She employed her family to do her laundry work, and she always insisted upon her linen being rinsed in running water. If her petticoats were not sufficiently starched, the whole batch of her relatives was flogged. Personally, we did not resent the lack of starch, to this extent, but I suppose that this family flogging may be regarded as typical of the usual procedure of beggars on horseback!

My grandmother, Mme Horvat, *née* Baroness Pilar, was the sweetest of women, and I loved her with a child's passionate devotion. She used to tell me all kinds of stories, and our old nurse ably seconded her. Whenever we walked by the river, and I exclaimed at the beauty of the lilies, I was thrilled anew by hearing how, long ago, when the Tartar hordes descended on Beletskovka, the women and children used to wade into the water, and shelter under the broad green lily-leaves until the marauders had passed. The peasants at Revovka were extremely superstitious, and they believed implicitly in witches and warlocks. It was common knowledge that certain women possessed tails and bewitched the cows, and woe betide the widow who mourned her husband too much! He would assuredly return in the likeness of a big snake, and make

an unwelcome descent down the chimney. I was terribly scared by some of these narratives, and I much preferred the pretty customs prevalent at certain seasons, now vanished, alas ! under the Bolshevik regime, since the teaching of Lenin would seemingly only include the ritual of blood in its category.

I chiefly remember the quaint methods of divination practised on New Year's Eve, when the girls of the village went out to listen at the closed doors, and those who heard a man's name mentioned were certain to marry within the year. They varied these proceedings by throwing their slippers over their heads, to see if they fell in the shape of anything that might be construed into an initial letter. Others preferred to try and catch the rays of the moon in a towel ; all pretty gay conceits, dear to the heart of girlhood, and, on St. Catharine's Day, cherry tree branches were put in water, and, if the bare wood blossomed by Xmas, then marriage bells were about to ring.

Midsummer Day was sacred to the river, a survival doubtless of those pagan customs which are so difficult to destroy. Large fires were lighted along the river banks, and the village maidens, wearing wreaths, leapt into the water, across the fires, and left the wreaths in the river as an offering, perchance to the God of Streams. The next morning, they set out to look for their wreaths, and those who were lucky enough to find them discovered by the direction in which the wreath had been washed up the way by which marriage would come.

The storks brought luck, and they were



invited to sojourn with us by means of wheels placed in the roofs on which they built their nests. The solemn birds were family friends, and, whenever a baby stork fell from its nest, everyone went to enormous trouble to put it back.

My grandmother had a passion for embroidery, and she employed from ten to fifteen girls constantly working for her. She believed that, as a typical industry, the art of embroidery in South Russia ought to be revived, and she spared no pains or expense over her hobby. She proved conclusively that the progress of the nations from East to West had left its traces even in embroidery patterns, as she often saw similar designs in antique carpets and Venetian work.

None of my grandmother's embroideries was ever sold: whenever a piece was finished, it was labelled with the date of its commencement and completion, and packed away in great presses, already nearly full of exquisite work. She presented a quantity of this embroidery to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the Tsaritsa's sister, when she was received into the Greek Church. My grandmother had the honour of acting as godmother to the Grand Duchess, and I believe her "christening" present was much appreciated. The embroideries were really wonderful: the designs were never drawn, the threads only were counted, and the pattern was evolved in this painstaking manner. Some of my grandmother's favourite designs were taken from Easter eggs, which were first covered with pinked-out wax, and colour inserted in them. Snow crystals formed another inspiration; my grandmother never tired of utilising anything decorative, and

she was unusually successful. I like to think of those quiet days—the industrious girls, and the good feeling which existed between the employer and the employed. It is difficult to realise that the progress of Revolution has destroyed all this, that the great presses have been broken open and their contents dispersed to the four winds, and that to ask a peasant to pass her time profitably would be accounted a sin.

My grandmother, notwithstanding her patriarchal outlook, could be the “grande dame” when occasion warranted, and my old nurse used to relate how one of her neighbours, a certain Prince, came to ask her in marriage. This gentleman believed in the impressiveness of pomp and circumstance, so he arrived at Beletskovka in a carriage and six horses. He was most courteously received—and refused—by my grandmother, and, when he drove away, his horses, by some preconceived arrangement, cast their shoes in the avenue. These “cast off” shoes were solid silver, a mute testimony to his wealth, and, as he passed through the village, he and his postillions distributed undreamt-of largesse. The Prince was a haughty personage, who lived in a gorgeous mansion boasting fifty rooms. He gave two balls yearly, when an orchestra was specially sent for from Petrograd, a four days’ journey from his estate. But in the Prince’s opinion nobody, save my grandmother and our family, was good enough to associate (even as a dance partner) with him and his, so the balls were rather tame affairs, a few couples only taking the floor, but those who did were—like Cæsar’s wife—entirely above suspicion.

Silver horse-shoes, expensive orchestras, and other unconsidered trifles cost money, and, as the male members of this super-aristocratic family were all in Hussar regiments, financial ruin eventually came as an uninvited and unwelcome guest: it closed the doors of the castle, the orchestra came no more, and the ladies of the house sought refuge in an institution for noble ladies of fallen fortunes!

My great-aunt, the Baroness Nina Pilar, was a romantic figure in my childhood's memories, as her name conjured up the fascination which surrounds those who breathe and have their being in the air of Courts. She was Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress Marie, wife of Alexander II, and she made her appearance at Court when she was sixteen, under the auspices of Countess Tizenhausen (another great-aunt), Grande Maîtresse de la Cour, who brought up Felix Soumarokoff, the grandfather of Prince Felix Yousopoff. There was a great deal of gossip about the paternity of old Soumarokoff, who had been confided, as a baby, to Countess Tizenhausen by an intimate friend, but nobody was ever any the wiser, and Soumarokoff's antecedents remained an unsolved mystery.

The Empress Marie loved Aunt Nina, and the Emperor was very kind to her until my innocent relative was the victim of chance, and a *costumière*. The Emperor had become infatuated with a certain Princess Dolgorouky, and one day, when my aunt was walking on the Quai, looking especially attractive in a new costume, she suddenly heard a voice addressing her in most endearing terms. She turned sharply round, and found



to her dismay that the voice was the voice of the Emperor! Explanations followed, and my aunt discovered that Princess Dolgorouky possessed a duplicate of her new costume, and, as their heights and figures were similar, it was a case of mistaken identity.

The Empress was almost always ill, but her Court was distinguished by its elegance and refinement, and my aunt was one of the acknowledged leaders of fashion.

Like most pretty women, Aunt Nina had her love story, but she never married. Her Prince Charming was the Grand Duke Nicholas, to whom she was secretly engaged. But, when the Grand Duke asked the Emperor's permission to marry his inamorata, the Emperor, who had never forgiven the contretemps on the Quai, refused his consent!

The unhappy lovers met in Switzerland when Aunt Nina was in attendance on the Empress, and there they bade each other farewell, and threw their engagement rings into the lake. The Grand Duke never forgot his broken romance, although he, like most lovers, eventually married someone else! But he was present at my aunt's funeral, and stood silently and sorrowfully looking at the coffin which held many of the dreams and much of the enchantment of his youth.

Aunt Nina practically sacrificed her life to save that of the Empress, although the latter died years later at Petrograd, when, it is asserted, a luminous Cross appeared over the Winter Palace, typical of her physical and mental sufferings.

It so happened that when the Empress and



my aunt were driving in Switzerland, their carriage was run into by a cart, and, in order to prevent one of the shafts from striking the Empress, my aunt stood up to protect her, and was badly bruised in the chest. Some time afterwards cancer developed, but my aunt survived her Imperial mistress, and became Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress Dagmar, and Grande Maîtresse de la Cour to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth. The Grand Duchess was very much attached to her, and at her death she begged my grandmother to take her place. My grandmother, for family reasons, declined the honour, but she often used to visit the Grand Duchess and the Grand Duke Serge, and I remember hearing her describe the pathetic figure presented by the Grand Duchess after her husband's assassination, when she had relinquished the splendours of life and had become a nun at Moscow.

My childhood was chiefly passed on my grandmother's estates. We led a somewhat patriarchal life at Revovka: a simple existence which will, I fear, never again return, and it is exceedingly difficult for me, as a Russian, to recognise the peasants of then and now. The average peasant was kindly by nature, entirely ignorant, and excessively difficult to educate. Whenever my grandmother tried to persuade her tenants to send their children to school, the answer was always the same: "Knowing how to read and write doesn't provide food. Our parents got on very well without education, our sons can do likewise." Their faith in the aristocratic class was boundless, they entirely depended on their landlords, but the Russian

peasant has always, unfortunately for himself, been easily influenced by speeches and printed matter—hence the complete success of the Revolutionary Propaganda, and the belief in many of the false statements circulated in order to damage the Imperial family in the eyes of the people. I cannot defend our own attitude in not attempting to combat this danger ; we were aware that it existed, but only one section, known as the Black Band, tried to destroy it by counter propaganda. Its efforts were unsuccessful, it received no support, for the very good reason that *nobody believed that the masses would rise*. The Russian aristocrat, secure in his class prejudices, and his optimistic faith in *himself*, was as loth as the French aristocrat of 1789 to realise that his position was, or could ever be, insecure !

The South Russian peasant, as I knew him, was a poetical, simple soul. After dinner we often used to watch the men turning their horses into our meadows for safety, and securing the animals' legs with chains, in order to prevent any inclination to roam. They invariably sang whilst making these nightly preparations, and they danced afterwards in the bright moonlight which flooded meadows and woodland with a white radiance. They had many quaint customs at Revovka, which may not be uninteresting to English readers who only know the Russia of to-day as a strange and poisonous growth, and not as the orchid which had its home in the eternal snows—a curious simile, perhaps, but in my mind a correct one. Our country, in many respects, was an exotic growth ; super-refinement walked cheek by jowl with ignorance, and an

almost oriental luxury brushed the skirts of poverty. It was a land of extreme contrasts, where emotions and passions either ran riot or else were suppressed to an undreamt-of extent.

It was almost inconceivable at one time that the family coachman, who obstinately turned his horses' heads in the direction of home because he met a white dog in the road, could ever become the Bolshevik who would have murdered his employers instead of protecting them from the bad luck attendant on the unwelcome animal!

I must admit that my grandmother was as superstitious as her coachman. She believed implicitly in dreams, and an old woman from the village was always sent for to expound the more exciting ones. I remember that one of her dreams had a disastrous sequel, inasmuch as it involved the dismissal of a very devoted servant who, my grandmother dreamt, had attempted to kill her. She resolutely declined to see him again, and he was sent away to another estate. I supposed she was influenced in this by the knowledge that, on several occasions, she had "dreamed true."

Our peasants confided all their joys and sorrows in my grandmother, and, when any of them married, we were always invited to the wedding. This invitation was issued on set lines; the bride-to-be, dressed in full national costume, plentifully bedecked with flowers and ribbons, came with her bridesmaid to the servants' sitting-room, where she was received by my grandmother. The girl thereupon knelt, and bowed three times, informing my relation what an honour our presence would confer on her



family, and, gratified by the assurance that we would promise to come, she withdrew, all smiles ! After the ceremony, which always took place on a Sunday, the whole of the wedding party came back to our house and assembled on the terrace, where a village orchestra discoursed strange sweet sounds, and where unwearied dancing enlivened the music and singing. We always gave one kind of present—a cow ! When I married, our employees surpassed themselves and gave me, not a cow, but two oxen !

We fasted on Christmas Eve until the first star appeared, when we partook of a heavy supper of which the fifteen courses always included fish. Hay was strewn under the tablecloth to remind us of the humility of the Manger, and it was customary for the children to carry the Christmas supper to their friends and relations. All the windows of the Chateau were darkened, but one was left open, and, when the first star appeared in the serene sky, this window was illuminated in honour of the Christ-Child. It was then that the children arrived “en masse,” carrying revolving paper transparencies adorned with pictures of Christ ; it was one illuminated stream of little children, and one of the prettiest sights imaginable.

New Year’s Day was an occasion for general rejoicing, when the men of the village assembled on the terrace to congratulate us, throwing wheat in our pathway as a sign of prosperity. We then witnessed the procession of our servants, who filed past us, accompanied by their special charges. First, came the stablemen leading the horses, who, in addition to being superlatively



well-groomed, were adorned with gilt crowns and many ribbons. Then came the herdsmen with their grave-eyed steers, whose horns were gilded in honour of the New Year ; the sheep were accompanied by the shepherds, and the cortège was terminated by the poultry maid, who escorted a turkey smothered in ribbons.

On the first New Year's Day after the Revolution, the crowd came to the Chateau as usual, but there was no procession of animals, no smiling faces, and no wheat-strewn pathway. We were confronted by scowling peasants, who roughly informed us that henceforth nothing belonged to us, since they were masters. But to do our own people justice, the better minded amongst them absented themselves, and only the worst characters were in evidence—and these, in their turn, were under the evil influences rampant in towns. I have no hesitation in stating that the motive power in the destruction of Russia emanated, and still emanates, from the Jews.

When the snows began to melt, the children and young people heralded the approach of Spring with song. Joining hands, they wandered singing in the twilight, a lovely, living chain of Youth in its Spring-time. They repeated these songs at Easter, that wonderful festival of Resurrection and the rebirth of Nature. On Holy Thursday the Gospels were read in the churches until midnight, and everyone carried a taper. My mother's estates were situated in the mountains, and it was a picturesque sight when the peasants wended their way churchwards at Easter. The church was half-way up a steep ascent, and the procession of taper-bearers could be traced

by hundreds of lights, as two villages participated in the ceremony.

Revovka was an entrancing home for a child blessed, as I was, with an imaginative temperament. We had our particular White Lady, a tragic phantom who haunted the Park, and who used to swing in the branches of the lime trees. She had been the mistress of one of my great-uncles, and she was buried in the Park. No one seemed to know her fate, but it was said that she was beautiful and unhappy. Her grave was marked with a flat stone, without any inscription, as the poor little creature had sought refuge from love and life in self-destruction. But Nature was kinder to her than Man, and an enormous bush of wild roses threw out caressing arms towards the cold stones, and showered pink petal-tears on the unhonoured dead.

There was a similar forgotten grave on my father's property, formerly a hunting-box of the Kings of Poland. The occupant of this grave had been the mistress of a king, and, like the beauty of Revovka, she had killed herself; but she was a restless spirit, and she used to haunt the Park and the house in the summer, running swiftly across the greensward, wearing little scarlet slippers and darting up the staircase, her scarlet heels tap-tapping as she went her way, unsubstantial and fantastic as the morning mist.

I used to dream all kinds of dreams, but I never anticipated what Destiny held in store for me. I was, by nature, timid; I was to become courageous through force of another's shining example. I was to see and experience the real meaning of selfless love, and I was to know the

comfort and beauty of religion. I do not say that I was irreligious—few Russians are really irreligious—our Belief is too deeply rooted—but I did not yet understand the meaning of the word Faith.

I always looked forward to our yearly pilgrimage to the Convent of Tchigrin, twenty-five miles away from Revovka. Custom ordained that we should proceed thither on foot, but the carriage invariably went with us ! The convent contained a miraculous Virgin which, when the Turks pillaged Tchigrin, had been taken away by them. One day a disconsolate nun walking on the river's bank saw something floating on the surface of the water. The Virgin had returned to her convent, and from that time it became the scene of wonderful miracles, and many pilgrimages. I liked Tchigrin ; it breathed an atmosphere of calm, standing alone in the midst of dense pine woods. But the wind, which respects neither convents nor humanity, was occasionally unkind to Tchigrin, as it swept away the sand which filled the crevices of the walls, almost like natural mortar, and the nuns daily brought bags of sand wherewith to repair the damage. This sand-carrying was an especial duty connected with Tchigrin, and occasionally it was a penance—but I think those simple creatures rarely deserved punishment.

I have perhaps devoted too much time to the festivals, ghosts and unexciting incidents of a country life. But I have done this in order to explain many subsequent happenings which would be otherwise incomprehensible to my readers. These events cannot, and must not, be judged entirely from your usual standpoint. We are



a race apart, our country is one of extreme mysticism and superstition. It is a land of miracles, where the holy pictures are believed to shed tears, and where every village possesses its seer and its saint. Russia is a country of vast distances, of densely populated cities, and lonely tracts which extend for thousands of miles. You cannot contrast the mode of life prevalent at Tooting with that of Tobolsk, or compare the customs of Moscow with those of Manchester. Our upbringing is entirely un-English. True, we are citizens of the world, we are indeed cosmopolitan, but—once a Russian, always a Russian. The Tsaritsa told me that, when she first came to Russia, she was greatly surprised to find that Russian servants did not understand the art of blackleading grates. She had always been accustomed to see shining grates in England when she stayed with her grandmother at Windsor—in Petrograd, shining grates were non-existent. We are miles apart from English ways in little things like these, and no Englishwoman worthy of the name has ever been known to be ignorant of the use of blacklead. But *we* ought not to be condemned for the non-recognition of its virtue. It is merely a question of outlook. In connection with these differences of outlook, I cannot do better than quote the words of a contributor to the "Daily Mail"; they will plead for my opinions, as the writer possesses the peculiar gift of racial and temperamental understanding:

"We have," he writes, "in England a cold-fish minded way of affecting to laugh at what we are prone to call local superstition. Let me tell you that this point of view will not work in



Africa." (He is dealing, I fancy, with Morocco.) "What is obviously a childish hallucination in Hampstead or Newcastle is sober reality under this immense blue sky. You can disbelieve a lot of truths you do not understand as you strap-hang homewards, but you will learn to believe everything in Africa."

Might not this also apply to Russia ?

## CHAPTER II

My childhood and early girlhood were passed quietly at Revovka and the Crimea. But I loved Revovka, and, whenever I went to stay with my uncle at Livadia, I took with me a little earth from the place which, to me, represented home. The great event at Revovka was the visit of my uncle Horvat, who came from Siberia to see my grandmother once a year. He was head of the Siberian railways, and occupied a political position which corresponded with that of a Viceroy of Ireland. He was a typical Horvat, tall, with deep, kind eyes, and he was also a very clever man. On the night of his arrival I never went to bed, and I remember that we saw the dawn together; he did not reach Revovka until 3 a.m. It was touching to witness his meeting with my grandmother. They were entirely "en rapport," and he was my greatest friend as well as my much loved uncle.

I never went to school. My first tutor was a priest, but, as I hardly knew Russian (we always spoke French at home) and he knew no French, I made little progress; afterwards Miss Ripe, an English governess, took me in hand, but I think she looked upon us as very much behind the times. The old house was protected at night by a watchman, and I regarded his intermittent coughing and his heavy tread somewhat as a lullaby.

Whenever he went to the next town by boat, the watchman "called" my grandmother's maid in a very curious manner. He was an illiterate peasant, and time, as time, conveyed no meaning to him, so he would occasionally tap on the maid's window and tell her that such and such a star was in the sky. By this simple calculation she was enabled to judge how much longer it was permissible for her to remain in bed.

Winter was a delightful season at Revovka, and I always wanted to be decorative, and drive out in the antique sledges which were painted with trails of flowers, and magnificently gilded. The modern sledges, covered with carpet, and piled up with bear skins, were not nearly so pretty. English people always associate sledges with wolves, and imagine that a winter's drive in Russia is fraught with desperate danger. The wolf terror is fast becoming a legend; wolves are now only found in districts far from the haunts of men, although an old custom at Revovka ordained that lanterns were hung outside the stables at night to scare away the wolves! But I met a wolf unawares one evening when I was crossing the park. I had never seen one of our national animals face to face, so I thought that the big grey creature was a dog. I called it, and ran towards it, desirous of its better acquaintance, but it merely regarded me with furtive, unfriendly, green eyes, and then turned and trotted away in the opposite direction. When I reached the house, I described my encounter with the strange dog, but, greatly to my surprise, my story produced general excitement, and a search-party set forth to look for the foot-prints in the

snow. These proved to be typical wolf marks, exactly like the print of a thumb, but our visitor had, by this time, completely disappeared.

When I was a young girl the disaffection in Russia was already well on the way to Revolution. In 1905, when I was staying with one of my uncles in Livadia who had charge of the Emperor's estates at Yalta, we were not left long in ignorance as to the methods which were employed by the Revolutionary Agents. It is now well known that most of the seeds of Revolution were sown at Yalta, but it was dreadful to see the boats smothered in red flags and to hear the Marseillaise sung defiantly from the water, since my uncle had prohibited all political meetings on land. One day, it was discovered that the golden eagles which marked the boundaries of the Emperor's estate had been broken and overthrown, but this act of vandalism was always attributed to the Jews and the more hot-headed of the students. There was general excitement in the Crimea at this time, and a few of the Revolutionary printing presses were secretly set up at the Grand Duke Constantine's Castle of Orianda, which for some reason had fallen into decay. It had always been my ambition to visit the ruins of Orianda, so one day I persuaded my cousins to accompany me thither. It was a forbidden expedition, but we considered the possible results of our disobedience would be amply compensated for by the mysteries of the underground passages, which we at once began to explore. As we neared the end of one of these the sound of distant voices broke the stillness, and, terrified out of our wits, we did not know whether to beat a retreat or to



dare all and discover whence the sound proceeded. Curiosity eventually conquered cowardice, and we crept cautiously along until the darkness was lit up by a glow of a large fire. Thinking that we had now reached the entrance to the infernal regions we turned and fled precipitately, and, risking punishment, described the whereabouts of Hell to my uncle. And Hell, in a way, it proved to be, as it was discovered that secret printing presses existed underground, and that most of the evil propaganda had emanated from Orianda.

Although the Jews instigated much of the prevalent sedition, the biter was occasionally bit, and in 1905 there was serious trouble. Many people assert that the actual Revolution began by beating the Jews, as some of the soldiers returning from the war became very unruly, and set about the Jews most unmercifully.

My mother, who had married as her second husband an officer in a regiment stationed near us, received news of the trouble just at the moment when we were starting to drive into town. But she rather pooh-poohed the warning, until she saw for herself that the report was not exaggerated. We first encountered people fleeing through the fields, and, when at last we reached civilisation, we found the town in a state of confusion. Windows were broken, Jewish shops pillaged, and the leaders, regardless of the protesting Hebrews, seized their goods and distributed them broadcast to the mob. The black and white praying robes peculiar to the Jews were in special request, as pieces of these, worn next to the skin, were supposed to render the wearer immune from marsh fever.

Next day, when I was walking in the Park, I

found myself close to the walled-in right of way which traversed it, and, to my surprise and horror, I heard the passers-by giving vent to most undreamt-of declarations. "It's the Jews *now*," said someone, uttering a curse, "but wait until the next time. We have our orders: soon it will be the turn of the landed proprietors!"

The speaker spoke the truth. Some days later fires and pillage broke out around my home, and, from the terrace at Revovka, we could see an ever widening circle of flame, and our peasants informed us that, most assuredly, Revovka would suffer next. But we escaped, although the house of Madame Tchebotaiff, a great landowner and Revolutionist, was one of the first to be destroyed. She was afterwards sent to Siberia, a rather ironical form of justice, I am inclined to think!

When all was calm, the Duma came into existence, in which representatives of every class met in Parliament for the first time. Troops were sent to punish the peasants, and many of them were flogged by the soldiers. Our peasants were not included amongst the offenders. The idea of whipping human beings was repellent to me, and, girl though I was, I felt that we, as a class, were responsible for the existence of many evils, and that it lay with us to try and remedy them. But whipping was applied to the guilty as the most effectual and the most easily understood antidote against rebellion: it is a barbarous punishment—in English eyes it must seem *utterly* so; but these whippings were as naught compared with the savagery and super-refinement of torture inflicted later by the whipped upon the whippers.

But my attention was soon to be diverted from

rebellion and punishment. Shortly afterwards I went with my grandmother to Petrograd, where my marriage was arranged ; in fact, I was already engaged when I was presented at Court. My fiancé was Captain Charles Dehn, of Swedish descent, whose ancestors had come into the northern provinces at the time of the Crusades, and the members of whose family were mostly generals or officers in the service of the State. Captain Dehn had taken part in quelling the Boxer Rebellion, and at the siege of Peking he was the first officer to scale the walls of the Forbidden City in defence of the embassies. For this service he received the Order of St. George (the Russian Victoria Cross), and the Order of the Legion of Honour was awarded him by the ambassadors of the various nations represented in Peking.

On his arrival at Petrograd he was presented to the Emperor, who appointed him an officer on the "Standart," and an officer of the Mixed Guard, whose members were chosen from various regiments, and many of whom were honoured by the personal friendship of the Emperor.

Captain Dehn was a great favourite with the little Tsarevitch and the Grand Duchesses, and he used to play with them in their nurseries, his nickname with the children being "Peking Dehn." Both the Emperor and the Empress manifested the greatest interest in his engagement, and the Empress intimated to my grandmother that she wished to make my personal acquaintance.

My engagement was formally announced in 1907, but we waited in Petrograd for a month before we were received by the Empress. The Grand Duchess Anastasie was ill with diphtheria,



and the Empress was nursing her at the Alexandria Palace, Peterhof, where, until all danger of infection had passed, she had isolated herself from the other members of the Imperial family.

How well I remember that first meeting with one whom I was to love so devotedly, and whose constant friendship has been one of my greatest joys. One summer morning in July, my grandmother and I arrived at the station at Peterhof, where my fiancé and a Court carriage were awaiting us. I was literally trembling with terror, and I was too excited to even notice Charles !

We duly reached the Alexandria Palace, but, as the Empress was still nervous about infection, it had been arranged that my presentation should take place in the Winter Garden attached to the Palace. We were received at the Palace by the Mistress of the Household, Princess Golitzin, who was exactly like an old picture, and whose adherence to regime made everyone dread being guilty of the smallest lapse of etiquette. But she was very kind and gracious to us, and I felt somehow that my simple white gown from Bressac's, and my rose-trimmed hat had met with her approval. As we walked through the Park to the Winter Garden I noticed a lady in one of the avenues, who stopped and looked at me intently. She was "petite," with an innocent baby face, and great appealing eyes, and so childish-looking in fact that she seemed only fit for boarding school. This lady was Anna Virouboff whose name was later to become associated with that of Rasputin, and whose friendship with the Empress has given rise to so many unwarrantable statements and scandalous stories.

I returned her scrutiny with interest, and we passed on with the Princess to the Winter Garden, a lovely tropical place, full of flowers and palms. It was exactly like a Garden of Dreams, at least I thought so until I saw the prosaically comfortable garden chairs, and noticed some toys and a child's dolls'-house. Then I decided that this beautiful garden must be real!

At last, advancing slowly through the masses of greenery, came a tall and slender figure. It was the Empress! I looked at her, admiration in my heart and in my eyes. I had never imagined her half so fair. And I shall never forget her beauty as I saw her on that July morning, although the Empress of many sorrows remains with me more as a pathetic and holy memory.

The Empress was dressed entirely in white, with a thin white veil draped round her hat. Her complexion was delicately fair, but when she was excited her cheeks were suffused with a faint rose flush. Her hair was reddish gold, her eyes—those infinitely tragic eyes—were dark blue, and her figure was as supple as a willow wand. I remember that her pearls were magnificent, and that diamond ear-rings flashed coloured fires whenever she moved her head. She wore a simple little ring bearing the emblem of the Swastika, her favourite symbol, and one which has given rise to so many conjectures, and been quoted triumphantly as proof positive of her leanings towards the occult by those who are ignorant of what it really meant to her.

Directly Princess Golitzin had left us alone, the Empress extended her hand for my grandmother and me to kiss; then, with a sweet smile,

and a world of kindness in her eyes, "Sit down," she said, and, turning to Captain Dehn: "When is the marriage to take place?" she enquired.

My nervousness had vanished. I was no longer afraid; in fact it was the Empress who seemed shy, but she was, I found later, always shy with strangers, a trait peculiar to her and to her cousin, the Princess Royal, Duchess of Fife. However, this excessive shyness was not accounted as shyness in Petrograd, it was called German superciliousness! and as such it has even been described by some English writers.

The Empress talked to my grandmother for quite a long time, as she was anxious to hear the latest news of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth; she then chatted to my fiancé, and I noticed that she spoke Russian with a strong English accent. She afterwards addressed me as the blushing heroine of the morning, and she seemed quite pleased at the interest which I had displayed in the dolls'-house.

"Where are you going to spend your honeymoon?" she said, her blue eyes now mischievous. We told her. "Ah! . . . I do hope that I shall see you again very soon. I am quite alone, I cannot see my husband or my children, I shall be so glad when this tiresome quarantine is over, and we can be together again."

Our interview lasted well over half an hour. The Empress spoke French to my grandmother and me, she made no attempt to converse in German; then she rose to say good-bye, and we kissed hands. "I shall see you again very soon," she repeated. "Be sure you let me know when you return."



I went back to Petrograd almost beside myself with happiness. Mine was not the worldly pleasure of one who had been presented to an Empress. My happiness had its origin in another source. I felt instinctively that I had found a friend, someone I could love, and who, I dared hope, might love me ! I was so tired out with my emotions that, on arriving home, I threw myself on my bed, regardless of my Bressac dress and my rose-wreathed hat, and I slept the sleep of exhaustion until four in the afternoon.

I was married two months later from my aunt's house in Livadia.

The Emperor received Captain Dehn before he left for the Crimea, blessed him, and gave him a beautiful ikon in a carved silver and gold frame. The Empress also presented him with an ikon, and, on our wedding day, we received a " wireless " from them, wishing us every happiness. This " wireless," so we heard afterwards, caused endless talk and many petty jealousies, as " wireless," then in its infancy, was only supposed to be used for important official communications.

We went to the Caucasus for our honeymoon and stayed three weeks in the mountains among the vines. It was the season of Autumn, and he had cast his flaming many-coloured mantle over everything. The wildness and luxuriance of that mountain region entranced me. I insisted upon being told all the legends connected with the locality, and I believed, with the peasants, that it was possible to hear the hoofs of the Centaurs, as they thundered down the passes in the silence of night. Gagree was an ideal place for a honeymoon, and I was actually sorry to return to

my beloved Revovka, although we received a right royal welcome from my grandmother and her tenants.

Revovka was fifteen miles from the nearest railway station, but the whole of the way to our estate was illuminated with blazing tar barrels, and at every turn of the road we were offered bread and salt. Needless to say, the drive was a little protracted, and the *pièce de résistance* consisted in the two oxen which were presented to us at the journey's end.

My married life began under the most auspicious circumstances. Charles had promised me that he would always remain in the Emperor's Personal Guard, and I possessed a subconscious intuition that my future was to be closely connected with that of the Imperial family. This feeling did not arise from any worldly outlook, I never had any idea of the material benefits which might accrue to us through the Emperor's regard for my husband. My first meeting with the Empress had influenced me in an undreamt-of manner. Although I felt it was ridiculous to associate any idea of sorrow with that radiant vision of the Winter Garden, I had, nevertheless, a strong feeling of fatality in connection with her. Time was destined to prove that my presentiment was right.

Our first home was in the Anitchkoff Palace, the residence of the Dowager Empress Marie, where the Guards had their quarters, but afterwards we moved to Tsarkoe Selo. Our house was immediately opposite the Palace, and close to the barracks. The officers of the Personal Guard were most picturesque individuals, since each

wore the uniform of the regiment from which he had been selected. There was no distinctive uniform; to be a member of the Guard was, in itself, an honour.

I used often to walk in the great Park of Tsarkoe Selo when my husband was on duty. The Palace dates from the time of Catherine the Great, and all the important receptions were held there. The Imperial family lived in the Alexander Palace, a white building in the style of the First Empire; the Palace had four entrances, the first was exclusively used by Their Majesties, two others were used for receptions, and the fourth was the entrance by which the Suite went to and fro. The Palace was entirely surrounded by the Park, in which was some beautiful ornamental water, a Chinese pavilion, and a bridge which connected the smaller park with that of the more important Palace.

As a young married woman, blessed with many kind relations and friends, it was not long before I took my place in Petrograd society. In 1907, one year after the Japanese war, life was not gay as many families were still in mourning, so those who looked for Court gaieties were disappointed—none being forthcoming. The Empress felt that the war was of too recent a date to warrant much entertaining; she was entirely sincere in this conviction, but her attitude did not meet with general approval. It was argued by the anti-Tsaritsa clique that an Empress of Russia belonged to Society, and not to herself. Her duty was merely to pose as a magnificent figure-head on the barque of pleasure—the war was over, and the world of Society wanted its



ceaseless round of empty pleasures once again.

Petrograd Society was divided into many sets; each Grand Ducal Court had its own particular clique, and that of the Grand Duchess Marie, wife of the Grand Duke Vladimir, was perhaps specially joyous. The Grand Dukes, taken as a whole, led amusing lives; they were usually very handsome men—quite heroes of romance, many of them possessing a great admiration for the Imperial Ballet, in which they had various fair friends.

It was an expensive existence even in 1907, when Petrograd was supposed to be dull! People went every Sunday to the Ballet, and on Saturdays to the Théâtre Français—this, a most fashionable rendezvous, where extremely décolleté toilettes were compensated for by an abundance of jewels! After the play, it was customary to adjourn to the Restaurant Cuba, or to that of L'ours, where a wonderful Roumanian orchestra enlivened supper; nobody thought of leaving the restaurants until three in the morning, and the officers usually remained until five! Occasionally, when I returned home in the early hours, I contrasted the dawn at Revovka with that of Petrograd; the same pearl, rose and silver tints painted the sky, but the dawn in South Russia witnessed no flight of human butterflies whose wings had been singed in the flame of pleasure. I was young enough to enjoy life, but at times our restless gaiety seemed to hold a hidden menace.

English was the medium of conversation in Society at Petrograd; it was invariably spoken at Court, and, although once fashionable to have German nurses, the fashion in 1907 was to have

only English ones, and many Russians who could not speak English spoke French with an English accent! The great shopping centre was "Druce's" where one met one's friends, and bought English soaps, perfumery and dresses. The "Druce habit" primarily emanated from Court where everything English was in special favour—Jewish Society and that of the "haute finance" existed in Petrograd, but neither touched us.

The great enlivenments of the Season after the Japanese war were the Charity Bazaars. The Grand Duchess Marie always organised one in the *Assemblée de la Noblesse*, a huge building where an ultra-smart throng of Society leaders sold all kinds of pretty and expensive trifles. The Grand Duchess Marie (who was a German Princess) occupied the centre of the room, and sold at her own table. She was a tall, striking-looking woman, but not so handsome as the Grand Duchess Cyril at whose table I occasionally assisted. All the Grand Duchesses had tables, as was the case with the greater and lesser lights of Society. In fact the position of one's table was the index to one's position in Society. The bazaars were brilliant functions, the toilettes were wonderful, and it was quite the usual thing to change one's gown three times during the day. The air was heavy with perfume, flowers were lavishly displayed, and the tired vendors occasionally refreshed themselves with the best brands of champagne.

The Empress had her own table at the *Assemblée de la Noblesse*, and I sold at it once. She made quantities of things herself, instead of sending haphazard orders to Paris or London.

The homely intimacy of her nature was very evident in this habit, nothing at her table was useless ; she was true to type, the type of Queen Victoria's descendants, the Empress shared Queen Mary of England's love for needlework, and, like her, crocheted many pretty "woollies" for bazaars.



### CHAPTER III

ALMOST immediately after my arrival at Tsarkoe Selo, I made the acquaintance of Anna Virouboff, the Lady of the Avenue, and my distant cousin, as her grandfather and my grandmother were related.

It is exceedingly difficult for me to discuss Anna Virouboff, as I am confronted with the tremendous prejudice which exists against her. In England she appears to be a Borgia-like heroine of the films, an hysterical sensualist, the mistress of Rasputin, and the evil genius of the Empress. Her political power is supposed to have been that of a Sarah Jennings and a Catherine Dashkoff, and her influence at Court paramount.

If I deny these charges, I shall lay myself open to the accusation of blind partisanship, and I shall be deemed an utterly untrustworthy chronicler; but, notwithstanding these possibilities, I can do no less than speak of Anna Virouboff as I knew her from 1907 until the day in March, 1917, when we were both removed from Tsarkoe Selo by order of Kerensky.

Anna's father, General Tanief, was Honorary Secretary of State, and all her family were connected with officers in the Imperial House. She married the same year as myself, but before her marriage she was deeply in love with General Orloff, who commanded the Lancers, and who was

a great friend of the Empress. Rightly or wrongly, Her Majesty thought that General Orloff would be too old a husband for Anna, and, although the General loved her, and desired nothing better than to marry her, Anna yielded her will to that of the Empress, and accepted Lieutenant Virouboff, to whom she was married in the Palace Chapel at Tsarkoe Selo. The union turned out a complete failure, and I believe that the Empress's original interest in Anna was intensified by the fact that she was indirectly responsible for this unhappy marriage. The Empress accepted what she considered to be her responsibilities very seriously, as her salient characteristics were thoroughness and a fine sense of justice. It was not difficult for her to show more kindness to one whom she already loved, and whose unhappiness was now so poignant. Anna was one of those beings who always look as if someone has hurt them; one wanted to "mother" Anna, to amuse her, to hear her confidences, and to laugh at her exaggerated joys and sorrows.

In appearance, Anna is a person entirely different from the Anna Virouboff of the films and the novel, and she even dares to differ from more serious descriptions of her. She is of middle height, with brownish hair, large, appealing, long-lashed, grey-blue eyes, and a little turned-up nose. She has a baby face, all pink and white, and, alas for the Vampire the Anna of romance, she was then very fat. But her smile was charming, and her mouth pretty; she was weak as water, as clinging as the most obstinate ivy, and the Empress treated her much in the way that one treats a helpless child. Anna was



ANNA ('ANIA') VIROUBOFF





excessively good-natured, always ready to help others, in whom she was never able to see evil. This virtue (for I suppose it is accounted a virtue) was the ultimate downfall of Anna. She was too credulous, and, therefore, too easily imposed on. She adored the Imperial Family with the devotion of an adherent of the Stuarts, but—and now I am about to make a statement which will be probably treated with derision—*she possessed no political influence whatever*; she could not influence the Empress one hair's breadth; the Empress petted her, teased her, and scolded her, but she never sought Anna's advice, save in questions of charity.

The Empress and her former Lady-in-Waiting were, however, one where religion was concerned; they shared the same religious sympathies in the midst of an unsympathetic and jealous entourage, and, as Anna did not get on well with the entourage, this fact gave the Empress an additional reason to protect her friend. Anna told me that some of the Ladies-in-Waiting disliked the Empress solely on account of her friendship with her, and, although she had told the Empress that, were she given an official position, all jealousies and comments would be silenced, the Empress had refused to entertain the suggestion.

Later on, when I became on intimate terms with the Empress, she gave me the reason for her refusal.

"I will never give Anna an official position," she said. "She is my friend, I wish to retain her as such. Surely an Empress is allowed the right of a woman to choose her friends. I assure you,

Lili, I value my few real friends more than many of the persons in my entourage."

Four years after her marriage, Anna met with a train accident. She never again walked without crutches, her body was completely deformed, but even then slander did not spare her, and evil tongues in Petrograd asserted that, as well as being the friend of the Empress, Anna Virouboff was the mistress of the Emperor!! After her accident, the Empress gave Anna a carriage and pair, and often drove out with her. She lived in a pretty little house which had once belonged to Alexander I, and she usually lunched at home, after spending the morning at the Palace. "The children" liked her, everyone who really knew her liked her, and the best proof of her absolute harmlessness lies in the fact that after the Revolution she was never condemned to death. Surely, if she had been such an evil creature, the first action of those in authority would have been to destroy her? But Anna Virouboff lives, and perhaps one day she will defend herself.

One Monday, shortly after my marriage, I received a note from Anna, asking me to dine with her that evening. Captain Dehn had been in Petrograd for several days, and, as I was rather lonely, I was glad to accept. The dinner was very gay, several officers had been invited, and Emma Fredericks, the daughter of the Minister of the Court, was also a guest. At half-past nine, we heard the sound of wheels, and a carriage stopped outside the house. Anna instantly left the salon, and, a few minutes after, the door opened, and, to our great astonishment, the Emperor, the Empress and the Grand Duchesses entered. They



were all laughing, as this surprise visit had been arranged by the Empress, who, seating herself, told us to do likewise, and motioned me to come to her.

"I told you that I should see you again very soon," she said, smiling, and thereupon she began to talk in the most friendly and simple manner.

Once again I had that curious, inexplicable foreboding of tragedy, but no tragedy lurked in that bright, gay room, and my gloomy thoughts were soon dispelled when I was presented to the Emperor.

This was the first occasion on which I had spoken to His Majesty, and I found him as charming and friendly as the Empress. His kind eyes, and his smile, struck me at once, he seemed to move in an aura of goodwill, and his peculiar fascinating charm of manner has been admitted even by his enemies, as M. Kerensky acknowledged that the Emperor possessed one of the noblest natures he ever met!

The Emperor, who bore a striking likeness to his cousin, King George of England, was a very amusing conversationalist, and blessed with a keen sense of humour. He instantly put me at my ease, and I made the acquaintance also of the Grand Duchesses, then quite girls, with whom I was later to become on terms of the closest friendship.

The Empress, having expressed a wish to play Halma, we had two or three games; she was greatly addicted to Halma, but she had one little lovable weakness in connection with it. She never liked to lose! The Emperor played dominoes in the next room, and afterwards Emma

Fredericks sang, the Empress accompanying her. Her Majesty was a very good pianist, and played with rare feeling, but her excessive shyness often precluded her from playing in the presence of others. At midnight the Imperial family took their departure, and the Empress whispered to me: "Au revoir, we shall meet to-morrow."

She did not forget. I was commanded to go to the Palace on the morrow. It was Tuesday, and I remember how pleased I was. "Everything nice happens on a Tuesday," I kept saying, for this was an old belief of mine.

After my meeting with the Empress at Anna's house, I often went to Tsarkoe Selo, and the Grand Duchesses and I used to ride on the wooden switchback, which was set up in one part of the Palace. It was tremendous fun, and we slid and played together for hours, but I quite forgot that I was a married woman and that I had hopes of becoming a mother in some months' time. However, the Empress had some idea of my condition, and one day, after she and Anna had been watching our performance on the switchback, Anna drew me aside.

"Lili," she said, "I've a message for you. The Empress wants you to be very careful just now." She held up a playful finger. "So no more switchback!"

During the months that followed, the Empress manifested the greatest kindness towards me. She insisted upon her own doctor attending me, and, when the Imperial family went yachting about a fortnight before the birth of my baby, my husband received orders to absent himself from the "Standart," and to remain with me

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instead. This act of consideration was due to the Empress, and it caused, like the "wireless," much petty jealousy and a good deal of comment.

But the expected baby delayed his arrival, and, when the Imperial family returned to Tsarkoe Selo, the Emperor's first words to my husband were :

"Has the baby come?"

"No, Sire, not yet."

"Well, well, don't worry, Dehn, these things will happen, you know."

However, the baby arrived next morning, and shortly afterwards Anna Virouboff came to make enquiries on behalf of the Empress, bringing with her two lovely ikons, and a package done up in tissue paper and covered with masses of rambler roses. The package contained a thin, fleecy shawl, and my happiness was complete when Anna told me that the Empress wished to be my son's godmother.

This was a great honour, but it presented difficulties, inasmuch as the Dehns, in order to benefit from certain family monies, were obliged to be baptized as Lutherans. The Empress was told about this, and, although she made no objection at the time, I was to discover later how deeply she was imbued with the faith of her adopted country. At the first christening, the Empress attended in person, and held the baby, now known as Alexander Leonide. She gave me a beautiful sapphire and diamond brooch, and all kinds of presents, and for seven years the question of the child's religion was never mooted between us. But, at the end of that time, the Empress told me that her dearest wish was that "Titi"

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(as she called him) should be received into the Greek Church.

"It is more than a wish, Lili," she said earnestly, "it is a command. I insist upon my godson being Orthodox. He must be baptized before Christmas."

This quiet persistency seems to me to afford one of the most conclusive proofs of how Russian the Empress had become. It may be argued that most converts are usually fanatics, but this was not so in her case. With that "thoroughness" which I have mentioned as one of her chief characteristics, the Empress was now more Russian than most Russians, more Orthodox than the most Orthodox. She was intensely religious. Her love of God and her belief in His mercy came before her love of her husband and her children, and she found her greatest happiness in religion at a time when she was surrounded by the panoply of Imperial splendour. She was to derive consolation from her religion throughout the Via Dolorosa of the saddened years, and, if it is indeed true that she met death in the noisome cellar-room at Ekaterinburg, I am sure that the same ardent faith sustained her in that last moment of agony. She told me that she had hesitated to accept the Emperor's offer of marriage until she felt that her conscience would allow her to do so and she could say with truth: "Thy country shall be my country, thy people my people, and thy God my God."

Titi's second baptism took place during the war at the St. Theodor Cathedral. I had come to Tsarkoe Selo from Reval, and the ceremony

took place at 8 in the morning. The Grand Duchesses Marie and Anastasie were present at the first service, but the Empress, previously indisposed, came with the Emperor and the suite to the second service, and afterwards took Holy Communion. Titi was obliged to remain during both services, but he was a good little boy, and he held his lighted candle carefully and firmly the whole time.

After the service we went back to the Palace, and the Empress displayed more emotion than she had done at the first christening. I could see how deeply the religious question had affected her all these years. She told me how relieved she was, how pleased, how she felt now that all was well with the child, and she gave her godson a wonderful ikon of St. Alexander and a Cross engraved with her initials.

But I must return to the earlier days—I have wandered from my narrative to give this example of how Russian the Empress was at heart ; hers was no eye-service—to know her made it impossible to doubt her genuineness.

The Empress was always sweet with Titi. She adored children, and she often came to my house, when she nursed the baby and whistled to him. This amused her, and she declared that Titi knew her whistle and always opened his eyes whenever he heard it. I remember that on the morning after the "Lutheran" baptism the Empress paid me a surprise visit.

"I've come to see the baby," she said. "Let me go to the nursery and fetch him."

I followed her upstairs, and she took Titi out of his cot and carried him to the drawing-room,

where she played with him for an hour, sitting on the carpet to do so.

I think I am right in saying that our affectionate friendship began from the birth of Titi. It was then that the Empress first called me "Lili," and as "Lili" I caused much mystification during the Revolution, when this signature was supposed to possess some cryptic meaning.

The Imperial Family spent part of that year in Finland, whither my husband accompanied them, and I and the baby went to stay with his parents. I was at Petrograd during the winter, and I saw a great deal of the Imperial Family, and learned to love them all. They led the simplest of lives; the Emperor often amused himself during the evening with a game of dominoes, and I worked with the Empress and her daughters. It was a real "*vie de famille*," the life which appealed to them as individuals, but not the life which appeals to the smart world, with which the Empress had so little in common. This was my first Christmas at Petrograd, and I determined to have a little tree in Titi's honour. I came in from my shopping late in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, and at 6 o'clock a courier arrived with a large box full of all kinds of "surprises." This was a present from the Empress—she always sent a similar box at Easter, and it always arrived at 6 o'clock. Indeed, so punctual was this present, that my husband often used to hide the box and pretend that it had been forgotten—but I knew better!

We were invited to spend Christmas Day with the Imperial Family. There was a gigantic Christmas tree, the Grand Duchesses and the



Tsarevitch thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and busied themselves in the distribution of friendship's offerings. The Empress had one curious fancy in connection with her Christmas trees: she always insisted upon blowing out the candles herself, and she was quite proud because she was able to extinguish the topmost candle by some extraordinary effort of breathing.

And now I feel I must speak of the real Tsaritsa, the Empress whose personality is known to so few—the Tsaritsa who was the most misjudged and unfortunate of human beings. I know in my heart that Time, the best historian, will make clear much that is dark. Even now, slowly, it is true, but none the less surely, people are beginning to wonder whether the Empress was in reality the pro-German and the hysterical *exaltée* she is supposed to have been. She did not deign to defend herself from the calumnies and lies which were scattered broadcast in Russia; to such a nature, these trials were sent by God—all that *she* had to do was to *endure*. But I saw her tears when she and the Emperor received the news of the loss of the "Hampshire" and the death of Kitchener. These were no Judas tears—hers was the grief of the woman and the Sovereign at the death of a brave soldier, and yet, whenever her name is mentioned in England, people say carelessly: "Oh, she saw to the torpedoing of the 'Hampshire,' and wasn't she the mistress of Rasputin?"

A pro-German, and the mistress of Rasputin!! Must this then, be the epitaph of the friend whom I knew, and the Empress to whom I owed the respect of a subject? I am not blind to the

knowledge that any vehement defence may do her memory still more harm, but, nevertheless, I am impelled to write of her as she existed in her home, and in our hearts.

I have read and heard almost all that has been laid to her charge ; I am no skilled writer, I know little or nothing of politics, but I can lay claim to some knowledge of my own sex. During the awful days of the Revolution, the Empress spoke to me as woman to woman. Her mind constantly dwelt on the days of her girlhood, her life with her grandmother, and the unhappiness of her childhood at Hesse Darmstadt.

The Emperor was the love of her life. She told me herself that he was her first love, but, the greater her love, the greater her fear lest she would prove unworthy. She gave herself to Russia when she married, and she accepted Russia as a sacred trust ; but she and the Emperor were always more husband and wife than Emperor and Empress—they lived the intimate life of happily married people, they liked simplicity, they shrank from publicity, and this love of retirement was the source of many of the evil reports which assailed the Imperial Family.

The Empress told me that when she cried at the marriage of her brother her tears were said to be tears of jealous rage at seeing herself dispossessed of authority.

" But, Lili, I was *not* jealous. I cried when I thought of my mother ; this was the first festival since her death. I seemed to see her everywhere."

She described the dull Palace, its strict regime, her father's intermittent kindness, and how much she had looked forward to her visits to Windsor.

I think that the intimacy with her grandmother unconsciously brought out the Early Victorian strain in the Empress's character. She undoubtedly possessed this strain, as in many ways she was a typical Victorian; she shared her grandmother's love of law and order, her faithful adherence to family duty, her dislike of modernity, and she also possessed the "homeliness" of the Coburgs, which annoyed Society so much. The Russian aristocracy could not understand why on all the earth their Empress knitted scarves and shawls as presents for her friends, or gave them dress-lengths. Their conception of an Imperial gift was totally different, and they were oblivious of the love which had been crocheted into the despised scarf or the useful shawl—but the Empress, with her Victorian ideas as to the value of friendship, would not, or could not, see that she was a failure in this sense. The Empress was in many ways as thrifty as her grandmother, but she did not share the miserly proclivities of her uncle, the late Duke of Saxe-Coburg. Her father was not a wealthy man, in fact life at Darmstadt was occasionally a question of ways and means. The Empress had been taught to be careful. She *was* careful.

"When I was engaged, Lili, I showed my grandmother some of the jewels which the Emperor had given me. What do you think she said?"

"I cannot imagine, Madame."

"Well . . . she looked at my diamonds and remarked: 'Now, Alix, don't get too proud!' The Queen was a tiny creature, and she wore such long trains . . . but she was very forceful."



Then, reminiscently, " My sister Elizabeth and I always loved the little houses in England . . . dear little houses set in their pretty gardens. You'll see them one day, but I never shall."

Queen Victoria had instilled in the mind of her granddaughter the entire duties of a *Hausfrau*. In her persistent regard for these Martha-like cares, the Empress was entirely German and entirely English—certainly not Russian. I have mentioned her horror when she arrived at Petrograd and discovered that the servants were unaware of the use of blacklead. This was an actual worry to the Empress.

" I wanted my grates blackleaded every day," she said. " They were in a very bad condition, so I called one of my maids and told her to do the grate, only to discover that it was not within her province. Eventually a man-servant was sent for, but imagine, Lili, I had actually to show him how to blacklead a grate *myself*."

This practical side of the Empress was entirely distasteful to the entourage—they laughed at it equally as much as they criticised her friendships with people whom they did not consider in any way worthy of the friendship of an Empress of Russia. I and Anna came under the category of the unworthy, for, although we were well born, we were not of the " sang azur " of certain noble ladies who were desirous of admittance into the charmed circle. The Empress was accused of not being true to class, but on one point she was inflexible ; she allowed no interference with her friendships. I sometimes wondered why she preferred " homely " friends to the more brilliant variety --I ventured to ask her this question,

and she told me that she was, as I knew, painfully shy, and that strangers were almost repellent to her.

"I don't mind whether a person is rich or poor. Once my friend, always my friend."

Yes, her loyalty was indeed worthy of the name of a friend, but she put friendship and its claims before material considerations. As a woman she was right, as an Empress perhaps she was wrong.

The aristocracy never tried to understand the real Tsaritsa. Their pride was up in arms against her—she found no favour in their eyes. I remember an incident which went to prove this, and which was widely discussed at the time.

Princess Bariatinsky, who then happened to be one of the Maids of Honour to the Empress, was a charming woman, but, like most of the aristocracy, she was excessively proud. One day, hearing that the Empress was about to go out, the Princess held herself in readiness to accompany her, but the Empress left the Palace by another entrance, accompanied by Mlle. Schneider, a Russian lady who gave the Empress lessons in Russian.

This unintentional slight was too much for the Princess. She, metaphorically and literally, put on her hat, and departed never to return, remarking as she did so : "*Quand une Bariatinsky met son chapeau, c'est pour sortir.*" The Empress detested any form of snobbism. One day, during the Japanese war, she was busy at one of her working parties at the Winter Palace; the windows of the salon opened on to the Neva Quai, and from where she sat the Empress could see the

soldiers and officers passing to and fro. Suddenly she looked intently out of the window—an expression of distaste on her countenance—and she sighed impatiently. An officer ventured to ask her what was the matter. The Empress pointed to the Quai:

“*That* is the matter,” she said, indicating an officer who had just been saluted by some soldiers, but who had not returned the salute. “Why cannot an officer recognise the men by whose side he may one day fall? I detest such snob-bism,” she added, coldly.

The scandals about the Empress, circulated by propaganda and rumour, will be believed, alas! for many years. She is credited with dabbling in occult practices, with a belief in Spiritualism, and of even attempting to call up the illustrious dead in order to influence the Emperor, who is supposed to have indulged in various dramatic séances at the Winter Palace. Perhaps these stories originated in the more or less retired life led by the Empress. This retirement was often enforced—she was a delicate woman, but, although many writers state that she suffered from the hereditary malady of her father’s family, she never mentioned its existence to me. Her heart was weak, owing to rapid child-bearing, and at times she experienced great difficulty in breathing. I never saw the slightest trace of hysteria. The Empress was apt to get suddenly cross, but she usually kept her feelings well under control. Apart from her delicate health, there was another reason for these periods of retirement. The Tsarevitch and the Grand Duchesses were often ailing, the Empress was a



devoted mother, and she insisted upon being with her children and sharing the duties of a nurse. The maternal element was strongly developed in her; the Empress was never so happy as when she was "mothering" somebody, and, whenever a person had gained her affection and her trust, she never failed to interest herself in the smallest details connected with him and his.

Her occultism has been grossly exaggerated. Her superstitions were of the most trivial description: she thought that a bright day was propitious for a journey, that the gift of an ikon to her was not propitious, but her fancy for the sign of the Swastika was not for the Swastika as a *charm*, only as a symbol. She told me that the ancients believed in the Swastika as the source of motion, the emblem of Divinity. The significance of it as a "luck bringer" never crossed her mind. "Faith, Love and Hope are *all* that matter," she would say. I will readily admit that she possessed a strong element of mysticism which coloured much of her life; this was akin to the "dreaming" propensities of her grandfather, the Prince Consort, and environment, and the Faith of her adoption fostered this mystic sense. English writers condemn this trait. I have before me a book in which the author quoted the opinion of one of the most bitter enemies of the Empress. "Alexandra Feodorovna," he says, "is an interesting type for future psychologists, historians and dramatic authors . . . a German Princess educated in England, on the Russian Throne, a convert to a peasant's religious sect, and an adept at occultism. She is made of the substance that those terrible, tyrannical Princesses of the

XV-XVII centuries in the western countries of Europe were made of; those Princesses who united in their personality the despot Sovereign, bordering on the witch, and skirting the fanatical visionary, who were completely in the hands of their reactionary advisers, and their insinuating wily confessors."

I had read the book containing this extract before I began to write my memories of the real Tsaritsa. I read many passages with eyes half blinded with tears, sometimes I felt mine would be an impossible task. How could I, an unknown name in England, attempt to combat such statements? I am not assuming for one moment that the writer of the book was ill-disposed towards the Empress; he wrote for posterity, setting down his own opinion and that of others. But I am curious to know if he ever knew the Empress personally, and if he ever shared the intimate life of the Imperial Family. I did *both*—not only in the days before and during the war, but also in the days of despair, when murder and sudden death faced us at every turn. It was then no time for pretence—but the Empress never changed; she was the same unselfish soul, the same devoted mother and wife, the same loyal friend.

The material for another book which was largely circulated in England was supposed to have been "given" to the author by a lady well known, and in great favour at Court. This novel—for it was, in many respects, fiction pure and simple—was mentioned to me, and, upon reading it, I was amazed to find the names of persons who never existed, and who were, there-

fore never at Court. There was no attempt to hide names under pseudonyms or initials—these imaginary beings lived, moved and had their being in the book as real individuals !

I was so much interested in the creative genius of the " Court Lady " that a friend of mine wrote to the part-author and asked him, on my behalf, to disclose her name. My request was refused : the part-author said that he was under an honourable vow of secrecy not to disclose the name of his collaborator !

But was this sporting ? The book contained certain damning statements against the Empress, it bristled with inaccuracies ; truly, anonymous Court histories cover a multitude of untruths ! But surely those who profit thereby should have courage enough to come out in the open when certain questions arise. You either make a statement, or you do not. If you believe in its truth, you should not be ashamed to say why, and wherefore, and to acknowledge the source of its origin, but I am inclined to think that the words, " I gave my word not to say who told me," place little value on malicious gossip, either in books or in everyday life.



## CHAPTER IV

THE Empress was an early riser. She had six dressers, of whom the chief, Madeleine Zanoty, was an Italian by birth, whose family had long been in the service of the Hesses. Louise Toutelberg, known as "Toutel," the second in authority, came from the Baltic, and there were four others. The dressers had three days' service, but none of them ever saw the Empress undressed or in her bath. She rose and went to her bath unassisted, and slipped on a Japanese kimono of silk or printed cotton over her undergarments when she was ready to have her hair arranged. The Empress was extraordinarily modest in her disarray, and in this the Victorian influence was again discernible, as her conception of the bedroom was à-la-mode de Windsor and Buckingham Palace in 1840. She did not countenance the filmy and theatrical, either in her lingerie or in her sleeping apartment; her underwear was of the finest linen, beautifully embroidered, but otherwise plain. Her red-gold hair was never touched with curling irons, and it was usually very simply dressed, except when great State functions called for a more elaborate coiffure.

The bedroom of the Emperor and the Empress was a large room with two tall windows opening on to the Park. It was on the ground floor, as, owing to the Empress's heart complaint, she

found the exertion of ascending any stairs very exhausting. A lift in the corridor communicated with the nurseries, but during the Revolution the water supply was cut off, and the lift stopped working. Nevertheless the Empress insisted upon mounting the stairs to visit the invalid Grand Duchesses, and I always accompanied her, going behind her, and propping her up at each step. It brought tears to my eyes when I saw how ill she was, but she was determined not to miss a single chance of seeing her beloved children.

A large double bed made of lightish wood was near the windows, between which stood the Empress's dressing-table. At the right of the bed was a little door in the wall, leading to a tiny dark chapel lighted by hanging lamps, where the Empress was wont to pray. This chapel contained a table, and a praying-stand on which were a Bible and an ikon of Christ. This ikon was afterwards given to me by Her Majesty, in memory of the days which we spent together at Tsarkoe Selo, and is one of my most treasured possessions to-day.

The furniture in the Imperial bedroom was in flowered tapestry, and the carpet was a plain coloured soft pile. The Emperor's dressing-room was separated from the bedroom by the corridor, and on the other side were the Empress's dressing-room and bathroom—but, alas! for her rumoured extravagances and her "odd" fancies! The bathroom was no luxurious place of silver and marble, but an old-fashioned bath set in a dark recess, and the Empress, with her Victorian love of neatness, insisted that the bath was hidden during the day under a loose cretonne

cover. There was a fireplace in the dressing-room, and the dressers waited in the next room until the Empress required their services. The Empress's gowns were kept here, and another room full of large cupboards (half-way up the staircase leading to the nurseries) was given over to the use of those maids whose especial duty it was to iron and renovate Her Majesty's clothes.

The Empress favoured long, pointed footgear with very low heels: she usually wore suède, bronze or white shoes, never satin. "I can't bear satin shoes, they worry me," she would say. Her gowns, except those worn by her on State occasions, were very simple; she liked blouses and skirts, and she was greatly addicted to tea-gowns: her taste in dress was as refined as that of Queen Mary of England; like her she disapproved strongly of exaggerated fashions, and I shall not easily forget her condemnation when I once came to see her wearing a "hobble" skirt.

"Do you really like this skirt, Lili?" asked the Empress.

"Well . . . Madame," I said helplessly, "c'est la mode."

"It is no use whatever as a skirt," she answered. "Now, Lili, prove to me that it is comfortable—run, Lili, run, and let me see how fast you can cover the ground in it."

Needless to say, I never wore a "hobble" skirt again.

The Empress has been accused of a mania for precious stones. I never saw any signs of it: true, she had quantities of magnificent jewels, but these possessions were consequent upon her position as Empress. She was fond of rings and



bracelets, and she always wore a certain ring set with one immense pearl, and a jewelled cross. Some writers assert that this cross was set with emeralds, but I do not agree. I am sure that the stones were sapphires, and, as I saw it every day, I fancy I am correct. The Empress had soft, well-shaped hands, but they were neither small nor useless hands, and she never had her nails polished, as the Emperor detested highly polished and super-manicured nails.

At nine o'clock the Empress breakfasted with the Emperor; it was a simple meal à l'Anglaise, and after breakfast she went upstairs to see the children. Then Anna Virouboff arrived, and, if certain interviews were imperative, these were usually given during the morning, but, if the Empress found herself "free," she went to inspect her training college for domestic nurses, which was arranged entirely on English lines. She had great faith in the value of English-trained nurses for children, and she put all her usual "thoroughness" into the working and management of this institution.

Lunch was at one o'clock, and at twelve-thirty on Sundays; but when, as it often happened, the Empress was indisposed, she either lunched in her boudoir or alone with the Tsarevitch. After lunch the Empress walked, or drove herself in a little open carriage. Tea was at five, but sometimes receptions were held between lunch and tea. The Imperial Family all met at tea, which was quite "en famille"; and dinner, which was at 8 o'clock, was often a movable feast in the literal sense of the word. The Emperor disliked dining in one special room, so a table was carried to

whichever room he happened to fancy that evening. Dinner over (and it was a very simple dinner) the Imperial Family spent the remainder of the evening together, and the Grand Duchesses, who had a *flair* for puzzles, usually indulged in puzzle-making: sometimes the Emperor read aloud whilst his daughters and their mother worked. It was the homely life of a united family—but a life with which the great world was not in sympathy; in fact a Russian writer did not hesitate to state openly that “it would have been better for Russia’s felicity if the Empress had succumbed to the many frailties which were attributed to Catherine II.” It is ironical to dwell on such an opinion when one remembers how the newspapers and the general public condemned her association with Rasputin. But had she been Catherine II, it is possible that this “frailty” might have been considered necessary for the “felicity” of Russia!

The Empress’s boudoir, known as “Le Cabinet Mauve de l’Imperatrice,” was a lovely room, in which the Empress’s partiality for all shades of mauve was apparent. In spring-time and winter the air was fragrant with masses of lilac and lilies of the valley, which were sent daily from the Riviera. Lovely pictures adorned the walls—and one of the Annunciation, and another of St. Cecilia, faced a portrait of the Empress’s mother, the late Princess Alice of England, Grand Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt.

The furniture was mauve and white, Heppelwaite in style, and there were various “cosy corners.” On a large table stood many family photographs, that of Queen Victoria occupying the place of honour.

The other private drawing-room was a large room, decorated and upholstered in shades of green, and the Empress had arranged in one corner a sort of tiny staircase and a balcony, which was always full of violets in the spring. In this room were pictures of herself and the Emperor, and some exquisite miniatures of the Grand Duchesses by Kaulbach, that of Marie being especially beautiful.

Books were everywhere ; the Empress was a prolific reader, but she was chiefly addicted to serious literature, and she knew the Bible from cover to cover. The library was next the green drawing-room, and here all the newest books and magazines were placed on a round table, and constantly changed for others in the order of their publication.

The Empress was a great letter-writer, and she wrote her letters wherever she fancied. Her writing-table proper was in the room next her bedroom, but I have often seen her writing letters on a pad in her lap, and she invariably used a fountain-pen. Before the war she wrote daily to a great friend in Germany, and she always read this lady's letters to me. Her stationery, like her lingerie, was plain, but stamped with her cypher and the Imperial Crown.

Apropos of her fondness for lilac and lilies of the valley, I may mention that the Empress loved all flowers, her especial favourites being lilies, magnolias, wistaria, rhododendrons, freesias and violets. A love of flowers is usually akin to a love of perfumes, and the Empress was no exception to the rule. She generally used Atkinson's White Rose ; it was, she said, " clean " as a



perfume, and "infinitely sweet"—as an eau-de-toilette, she favoured Verveine.

When I first knew the Empress, she did not smoke, but during the Revolution she smoked cigarettes : I fancy they soothed her overwrought nerves.

The Empress always kept a diary, but I shall presently relate how it became my duty to burn her diaries, also those of Princess Sofia Orbeliani and Anna Virouboff ; and last, but not least in sentimental interest, all the letters which the Emperor had sent her during their engagement and married life.

Dr. Botkin, the devoted friend and physician to the family, was introduced to me by Anna Virouboff, and I liked him exceedingly. He was a clever, liberal-minded man, and, although his political views were opposed to those of the Imperialists, he became so devoted to the Emperor that his once cherished views mattered little to him.

I think, from my description, which possesses the merit of accuracy, that it will be recognised what simplicity of life surrounded the rulers of one of the greatest Empires the world has ever known. Simplicity characterised all their doings, the simplicity which was to prove their undoing. The Imperial pair wished to lead the lives of private individuals ; they imagined that it was possible. In Russia it has never been popular or possible for a Tsar to be human ; he was an emblem, a representative of crystallised traditions ; he united in himself the rôles of the Father of his people and the splendid, all-conquering, unapproachable Tsar. An Emperor or an Empress in mufti, so to

speak, never yet appealed to popular imagination, and, just as the English cottager preserved and venerated the horrible "royal" oleographs of Queen Victoria, so did the Russian peasant venerate similar oleographs of the Emperor and his Consort. Neither cottager nor peasant would have understood or cared to possess "family" photographs of their rulers. Popular imagination has ever been appealed to by scarlet and ermine, golden crowns, and kingly sceptres. It doesn't understand or value anything else.

In the March following the birth of Titi, the Empress wrote and told me that she was anxious to see her godson, then nine months old. So I went with him to Tsarkoe Selo, where the Grand Duchesses made much of him, and used to take it in turns to bath him. We took up our quarters in Anna's house, where the Empress had personally superintended the arrangement of the baby's room, and she sent his cot, of which she crocheted the hangings and coverlet herself. She spent hours with the child, playing with him, "snapshotting" him, and, after our first visit, I was constantly "commanded" to "come and bring the baby." I remember that, when I once missed the train, and arrived too late for lunch, the Empress, who was waiting for me, noticed my fatigue, and ordered tea. She took Titi on her lap, and saying, "Well . . . Lili, you do look hungry and tired," she fed me with pieces of sandwiches, pressing them on me much in the same way that a mother soothes a tired child. But she was ever "*plus mère que mère, plus Russe que Russe*," but her love of country was only for Russia and England. She had, and I say it with

absolute conviction, no love for Germany as her "Motherland." She liked Darmstadt, because to her it represented home, but she manifested no interest in any other part of Germany.

My friendship with the Empress increased as the months passed. That autumn the Imperial Family went to Livadia, and I stayed with my uncle, going constantly to and from the Palace. The first day I saw the Empress in Livadia she gave me an entire layette for Titi which she had made herself. I had wondered why she had telegraphed for his measurements—now I knew! She would often call at my uncle's and take the baby with her for a drive. The little thing got to know her well, and one day, looking at her photograph, he said "Baby"; so after this the Empress of Russia was known to Titi by her own wish, *tout simplement*, in English, as "Aunt Baby." He always called her "Aunt Baby," and in many of her letters she alludes to herself by this pet name, but, needless to say, the favour shown to me and my child by the Imperial Family was the source of much comment at Court.

On one point my mind was made up. I determined never to allow any ideas of preferment or material advantage to spoil what was to me a condition of great happiness. My husband entirely agreed, and he declined to consider any mention of the posts which were from time to time spoken of in connection with him. As for myself, the Empress understood and appreciated my outlook. "You can always be my *friend* if matters remain as they are," she said. "I don't want to lose my Lili in an official personage."

We were very happy in those days. The



Grand Duchesses were fast leaving childhood behind them and blossoming into charming girls ; they did not greatly resemble one another, each was a type apart, but all were equally lovely in disposition. I cannot believe that any men so inhuman existed as those who, it is said, shot and stabbed those defenceless creatures in the house of death at Ekaterinburg. Apart from their beauty, their sweetness should have pleaded for them, but, if it is true that they have " passed," then surely no better epitaph could be theirs than the immortal words, " Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

The Grand Duchess Olga was the eldest of these four fair sisters. She was a most amiable girl, and people loved her from the moment they set eyes on her. As a child she was plain, at fifteen she was beautiful. She was slightly above middle height, with a fresh complexion, deep blue eyes, quantities of light chestnut hair, and pretty hands and feet. She took life seriously, and she was a clever girl with a sweet disposition. I think she possessed unusual strength of character, and at one time she was mentioned as a possible bride for the Crown Prince of Roumania. But the Grand Duchess did not like him, and, as the Crown Prince liked the Grand Duchess Marie better than her sister, nothing came of the project. The sisters loved each other, and united in a passionate adoration for the Tsarevitch. In a recent book published in England, the Grand Duchesses have been described as Cinderellas, who were entirely subservient in family life owing to the attention paid the Tsarevitch. This

is untrue. It is a fact that the Empress ardently desired a son, and that the birth of four daughters in succession was a disappointment to her, but she loved her daughters, they were her inseparable companions, and their plain and rather strict upbringing had nothing whatever of the Cinderella element.

The Grand Duchess Tatiana was as charming as her sister Olga, but in a different way. She has been described as proud, but I never knew anyone less so. With her, as with her mother, shyness and reserve were accounted as pride, but, once you knew her and had gained her affection, this reserve disappeared, and the real Tatiana became apparent. She was a poetical creature, always yearning for the ideal, and dreaming of great friendships which might be hers. The Emperor loved her devotedly, they had much in common, and the sisters used to laugh, and say that, if a favour were required, "Tatiana must ask Papa to grant it." She was very tall, and excessively thin, with a cameo-like profile, deep blue eyes, and dark chestnut hair . . . a lovely "Rose" maiden, fragile and pure as a flower.

All the Grand Duchesses were innocent children in their souls. Nothing impure was ever allowed to come into their lives—the Empress was very strict over the books which they read, which were mostly by English authors. They had no idea of the ugly side of life, although, poor girls, they were destined to see the worst side of it and to come in contact with the most debased passions of humanity ! And yet it has been stated that the Empress, in her neurotic, religious exaltation, gave each of her daughters to Rasputin. Knowing

her, knowing the Emperor, and knowing the daughters as I did, such an assertion savours of the monstrous; it has even been circulated that Mlle. Tutcheff objected to Rasputin being admitted to the Grand Duchesses' bedchamber to give them his nightly blessing after they had retired to bed, and that, as her protest was disregarded, she sent in her resignation. Mlle. Tutcheff was never governess to the Grand Duchesses, and she never witnessed Rasputin's nightly blessing, inasmuch as it never took place. The Emperor would never have permitted such a thing, even had the Empress wished it, and she certainly did not consider such a proceeding necessary for her daughters' salvation. Mlle. Tutcheff was the victim of her own spite and jealousy. She was not a very pleasant person, and, whenever the Imperial Family went to Livadia, she usually made herself very disagreeable, as she thoroughly disliked the Crimea. Continual grumbling wears away the patience of most people; the Empress was only human, and Mlle. Tutcheff was first given a holiday and then dismissed by the Grande Maitresse de la Cour.

Mlle. Tutcheff did not hesitate to spread all kinds of vindictive rumours to account for her dismissal. She was too small-minded to state the real facts, and, as *l'affaire Rasputin* was generally spoken about, she decided to vent her spite on the Empress through this medium. I again assert that there is no truth in the legend of Rasputin's nightly blessing.

When I first knew the Grand Duchess Marie, she was quite a child, but during the Revolution



she became very devoted to me, and I to her, and we spent most of our time together—she was a wonderful girl, possessed of tremendous reserve force, and I never realised her unselfish nature until those dreadful days. She too was exceeding fair, dowered with the classic beauty of the Romanoffs ; her eyes were dark blue, shaded by long lashes, and she had masses of dark brown hair. Marie was plump, and the Empress often teased her about this ; she was not so lively as her sisters, but she was much more decided in her outlook. The Grand Duchess Marie knew at once what she wanted, and why she wanted it.

Anastasie, the youngest Grand Duchess, might have been composed of quicksilver, instead of flesh and blood ; she was most amusing, and she was a very clever mimic. She saw the humorous side of everything, and she was very fond of acting ; indeed, Anastasie would have made an excellent comedy actress. She was always in mischief, a regular tom-boy, but she was not backward in her development, as M. Gilliard once stated. Anastasie was only sixteen at the time of the Revolution—no great age after all ! She was pretty, but hers was more of a clever face, and her eyes were wells of intelligence.

All the sisters were utterly devoid of pride, and, when they nursed the wounded during the war, they were known as the Sisters Romanoff, and thus answered to the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

The Grand Duchesses occupied two bedrooms ; Olga and Tatiana shared one, Marie and Anastasie the other. These apartments were large and light, decorated and furnished in green and white. The sisters slept on camp beds—a custom dating

back to the reign of Alexander I, who decreed that the daughters of the Emperor were not to sleep on more comfortable beds until they married. Ikons hung in the corners of the rooms, and there were pretty dressing-tables, and couches with embroidered cushions. The Grand Duchesses were fond of pictures and photographs—there were endless snapshots taken by themselves, those from their beloved Crimea being especially in evidence.

A large room, divided by a curtain, served as dressing-room and bathroom for the Grand Duchesses. One half of the room was full of cupboards, and in the other half stood the large bath of solid silver. The Grand Duchesses had departed from their mother's simple ideas, and, when they bathed at night, the water was perfumed and softened with almond bran. Like their mother, they were addicted to perfumes, and always used those of Coty. Tatiana favoured "Jasmin de Corse"; Olga, "Rose Thé"; Marie constantly changed her perfumes, but was more or less faithful to lilac, and Anastasie never deviated from violette.

The Grand Duchesses' attendants were a compromise between dressers, maids and nurses. They were all girls of good family, the most favoured being Mlle. Tegeleff, known as "Shoura"; the other two were "Elizabeth" and "Neouta." The Empress—once again Victorian—was very desirous for these girls to wear caps, but they declined respectfully but firmly to do so, and she did not press the matter. The Grand Duchesses liked their attendants, and often used to help them tidy the rooms and make the beds!

Unlike their mother, but like most Russians, the four sisters showed a predilection for dress, but the Empress had her own ideas on the subject, and she chose and ordered all their clothes. As children, the girls were dressed alike, but later the two eldest wore similar gowns, and the next two were dressed, so to speak, "to match." The only frivolity which the Empress tolerated lay in her daughters' dressing-gowns, which carried out the colours of the regiments of which they were colonels, and the Grand Duchesses were very proud of their dressing-gowns and their regiments. They were always present at parades, when they wore the uniform of their regiments, and this excitement was one of their chief pleasures.

The sisters led most ordinary, uneventful lives : their exalted station never troubled them. With true courtesy they always made me pass out of a room before them, there was no ceremony, no fuss—they were the dearest, most affectionate girls, and I loved them all. The Grand Duchesses rose early, and were soon occupied with their lessons. After morning lessons they walked with the Emperor, and between lunch and tea they again went out with him. They spoke Russian, English or a little French, *never* German, and, although they danced well, they had not much chance to do so, unless the Imperial Family went to the Crimea, then Princess Marie Bariatinsky always arranged a series of dances for them.

The motive power in the lives of these charming children was family love. They had no thought apart from their home. Their affection was lavished on their father and mother, their brother and a few friends. Their parents were their



paramount consideration. With the "children," as we called them, it was always a question of "Would Papa like it?" "Do you think this or that would please Mama?"—and they always alluded to their father and mother by the simple Russian words of Mama and Papa.

The Tsarevitch, that Child of many Prayers, one of the most pathetic figures in this tragedy of innocence, was born in 1904, and he was a healthy baby weighing eleven pounds at the time of his birth; many of the stories about his delicacy of constitution which have been given to the world are very exaggerated, especially the one which insists that the Nihilists mutilated the child when he was on the Imperial yacht. No such mutilation ever took place. The Tsarevitch certainly suffered from the hereditary trouble of thin blood-vessels, which first became apparent after a fall in Spala, but he was otherwise a normally healthy boy, and at the time of the Revolution he was really getting much stronger and much freer from the complaint. I know he was ailing at Tobolsk and Ekaterinburg, but that is hardly to be wondered at!

In appearance he resembled his sister Tatiana: he had the same fine features, and her beautiful blue eyes; he loved his sisters, and they adored him, and patiently submitted to his teasing. The Tsarevitch was a lively, amusing boy, with a wonderful ear for music, and he played well on the *balalika*: like Tatiana he was shy, but, once he knew and liked anyone, this shyness vanished.

The Empress insisted upon her son being brought up, like his sisters, in a perfectly natural way. There was no ceremonial in the daily life

of the Tsarevitch : he was merely a son, and a brother to his family, although it was sometimes quaint to see him assume "grown up" airs. One day, when he was indulging in a romp with the Grand Duchesses, he was told that some officers of his regiment had arrived at the Palace and begged permission to be received by him.

The Tsarevitch instantly ceased his game, and, calling his sisters, he said very gravely : "Now, girls, run away. I am busy. Someone has just called to see me on business."

He adored his mother, and her passionate devotion to him is world-known, although, like many other things, this devotion has been used as a weapon against her. To the Empress, the Tsarevitch represented the direct result of prayer, the Divine condescension of God, the crowning joy of her marriage. Surely, if she manifested undue anxiety over him, she only did what all mothers have done, and will do until the end of time. There was certainly some subtle sympathy between mother and son : she was all that was lovely and beloved to him, and I especially remember one typical instance of this devotion :

My husband and I had been dining with the Imperial Family, and after dinner the Emperor suggested that we should accompany them to the Tsarevitch's bedroom, as the Empress always went thither to bid him good night and hear him say his prayers. It was a pretty sight to watch the child and his mother, and listen to his simple prayers, but, when the Empress rose to go, we suddenly found ourselves in complete darkness—the Tsarevitch had switched off the electric light over his bed !

"Why have you done this, Baby?" asked the Empress. "Oh," answered the child, "it's only light for me, Mama, when you are here. It's always quite dark when you have gone."

He loved his father, and the Emperor's great wish in the "happy days" was to undertake his son's education himself: this, for many reasons, was impossible, and Mr. Gibbs and M. Gilliard were his first tutors. Later, under very different conditions, the Emperor was enabled to carry out his wish. In the gloomy house at Tobolsk, he taught the Tsarevitch, and in the squalor and misery of Ekaterinburg the lessons still continued; but perhaps the greatest lesson learnt by the Tsarevitch and the other members of the unfortunate family was that of Faith: for faith sustained them, and strengthened them at a time when riches and friends had fled and they found themselves betrayed by the very country which had been all in all to them.

The Tsarevitch had various playmates—all sorts and conditions of boys shared his games: there were the two sons of his sailor-servant, two peasant boys with whom he was on friendly and affectionate terms, and my "Titi," who ran about with him, upsetting everything, and thoroughly enjoying himself. The Heir to the Throne was as courteous as his sisters. One day the Empress and I were sitting in the mauve boudoir, when we heard the excited voices of the Tsarevitch and Titi in the next room.

"I believe they're quarrelling," said the Empress, and she went to the door and listened to what the children were saying. Then she turned to me laughing. "Why they're not



quarrelling, Lili. Alexis is insisting that Titi shall come into the mauve room first, and the good Titi won't hear of it ! "

If the Tsarevitch had any peculiarities, I think the most striking was a decided penchant for hoarding. Many descendants of the Coburgs have been unusually thrifty, and perhaps the Tsarevitch inherited this trait. While thrifty he was really a most generous child, although he hoarded his things to such an extent that the Emperor often teased him unmercifully. During the sugar shortage he saved his allowance of sugar, which he gravely distributed among his friends. He was fond of animals, and his spaniel, "Joy," has happily found a home in England : his chief pet at Tsarkoe was an ugly sandy and white kitten, which he once brought from G.H.Q. This kitten he christened Zoubrovka, and bestowed a collar and a bell on it as a signal mark of affection. "Zoubrovka" was no respecter of palaces, and he used to wage war with the Grand Duchess Tatiana's bulldog "Artipo," and light-heartedly overthrow all the family photographs in the Tsaritsa's boudoir. But "Zoubrovka" was a privileged kitten, and I have often wondered what became of him when the Imperial Family were taken to Tobolsk.

All the children were fond of animals. The Grand Duchess Tatiana's pet was a bulldog called "Artipo," who slept in her bedroom, much to the annoyance of the Grand Duchess Olga, who disliked its propensity for snoring. The Grand Duchess Marie favoured a Siamese cat, and, the year before the Revolution, Anna Virouboff gave a little Pekinese dog to the Grand Duchess Anastasie.

This little creature had a tragic history. Curiously enough many people said that "Jimmi" seemed an unlucky dog ; but he was a sweet little creature, whose tiny legs were so short that he could not walk up or down stairs. The Grand Duchess Anastasie always carried him, and "Jimmi" lavished a Pekinese devotion on her and her sisters.

"Jimmi" went with the family to Tobolsk, and he is now identified in history with their fate. According to one account, his corpse was found, preserved in ice, at the top of the disused mine shaft ; another writer has it that "Jimmi" defended his friends in the cellar at Ekaterinburg, barking defiance at the murderers, and guarding Tatiana's fainting body until they were both killed. His skeleton is said to have been discovered later in a clump of undergrowth, and subsequently identified by its size and by a bullet hole in the skull.

He was a dear little dog, and probably, could he have spoken, he would have desired no better fate than to perish with those in whose fortunes and affections he had equally participated.

The Emperor greatly resembled King George V in appearance, but his eyes were unforgettable ; and those of his cousin, although fine, do not possess the expression peculiar to the eyes of the Emperor. It was a combination of melancholy, sweetness, resignation and tragedy : Nicholas II seemed as if he saw into the tragic future, but he also seemed to see the Heaven that lies beyond this earth. He was "God's good man." I can give no higher praise, render him no more fitting homage.

He was essentially charming : when you were with him you forgot the Emperor in the individual ; he made formality impossible. He loved to tease people, and I came in for my full share of this propensity. One day when I was out walking at Livadia, several carriages passed me, but I did not especially notice their occupants. The next evening when I was dining at the Palace, the Emperor addressed me in grave tones : "*Lili — ce n'est pas bien, vous comprenez, mais ne pas reconnaître vos amis.*"

"*Mais, Votre Majesté, qu'est que vous voulez dire ?*"

"Well," said the Emperor, "you *cut* me yesterday."

"*Votre Majesté, it's impossible !*"

"Ah . . . it's quite possible, Lili. I drove past you, and bowed to you many times, but you wouldn't recognise me. Tell me in what I've offended you." And he continued to tease me until I felt ready to die with confusion. He loved his wife : no one has ever dared dispute the quality of the affection which existed between them ; theirs was an ideal love-marriage, and when their love was tried in the furnace of affliction it was not found wanting.

Nicholas II had been reproached for his weakness of character, but this weakness was not weakness in the literal sense. The Empress, who was fully aware of what was said concerning the Emperor and herself, once told me how utterly people misunderstood her husband. "He is accused of weakness," she said bitterly. "He is the strongest—not the weakest. I assure you, Lili, that it cost the Emperor a tremendous effort



to subdue the attacks of rage to which the Romanoffs are subject. He has learnt the hard lesson of self-control, only to be called weak ; people forget that the greatest conqueror is he who conquers himself."

On another occasion she remarked that she knew that the Emperor and herself were blamed for not surrounding themselves with genuine people.

"It's an extraordinary thing, Lili," she said, "we've tried to find genuine advisers for the last twenty years, but we've never found them. I wonder whether any exist !"

The Empress always resented the cruel slanders which were circulated about the Emperor.

"I wonder they don't accuse him of being too good : that, at least, would be true !" she cried.

As for herself, she troubled little.

"Why do people want to discuss me," she said. "Why *can't* they leave me alone !" Again : "Why will people insist that I am pro-German ? I have spent twenty years in Germany, and twenty years in Russia. My interests, and my son's future lie in Russia : how, therefore, can I be anything but Russian ?"

The Empress has been censured for exerting undue influence over her husband, and this "pernicious" influence has made her the scapegoat for all the ills which have befallen Russia. But her "influence" was merely that of a good woman over a man. If she influenced the Emperor in any other way, it was done unconsciously. I will never believe otherwise, although, in making this assertion, I shall perhaps be confronted with all kinds of hostile criticism. It will be asked by

what right I dare defend a woman who has been tried and found guilty. But I dare to do so. True, I am a person whose name is entirely unknown to the general public, but it cannot be disputed by those who knew life at Tsarkoe Selo and Petrograd that I was honoured by the Empress's friendship and confidence.

The Emperor shared his wife's "thoroughness"; he never believed anything until (were it possible) he had tried it for himself. During the war, a new uniform was submitted for the Emperor's approval; he determined to test its qualities, and he walked for twenty miles wearing it, in order to see what weight was possible to carry with it. The sentinels failed to recognise the Emperor when he passed them wearing the sample "Tommy's" kit, a fact which greatly amused him; but, as a result of his practical experiment, the uniform (with certain alterations suggested by the Emperor) was "passed."

The Empress put her husband first in everything—it was always "The Emperor wishes it," "The Emperor says so"; she was very tender towards him, the maternal element was apparent in her love even for her husband: she took care of him, but perhaps this arose chiefly from a feeling that he suffered by reason of his love for her.

As husband and wife they were indeed one. They only asked happiness of life. The Emperor's tastes were of the simplest, the Empress was shy and retiring—both their dispositions were similar—and this similarity of tastes, ideal in the usual walks of life, was fatal to both of them as rulers. By this I do not for one moment wish to infer that

they shirked their responsibilities : far from it, they were always ready to assume them, but they forgot that the times were out of joint, that it was their duty always to live in the fierce light that beats upon a throne. I do not think that by so doing they could have saved Russia. The case of Nicholas II and Alexandra of Russia is almost parallel with that of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The Russian monarchs, like their French prototypes, were called upon to reign over a country ripe for Revolution, whose dragon's teeth had been sown by the vicious hands of their predecessors. France boasted as extravagant and exotic a society as that of Russia : the writing was already to be seen on the walls of Versailles and the Winter Palace, but the Sovereigns of Then and Now heeded it not. Louis XVI wanted to be left alone in his workroom, to make locks and to mend watches, and Marie Antoinette sighed for the simple pleasures of the Trianon and the pastoral joys of a farmer's wife.

Nicholas II did not care to be a locksmith, he merely wished to live the quiet life of a well-bred gentleman : chivalrous by nature, he (and here an English writer is correct) came nearer the British public-school idea than any other. The Empress did not require a Trianon, she wanted a home ; but, although she loved Russia, Russia was always antagonistic to her. This she never realised, any more than she recognised the fact that the peasant class never wanted her to try and understand them.

The Emperor was a clever man, and he possessed that wonderful memory for faces peculiar to his uncle, King Edward VII. On one occasion



when my husband was presented to the Emperor after receiving some special decoration, a colonel of a Siberian regiment also attended the Levée. The Emperor stretched out his hand to the colonel. "Surely I've seen you before?" he enquired. "Yes, Your Majesty." "Well, but *where?*" continued the Emperor, in puzzled tones; then brightening, "Ah, I know," he said, "I met you twelve years ago when I passed through Saratof."

The chief pleasures of the Emperor were those appertaining to an outdoor life. He was a good shot, fond of all kinds of sport, and his hands were exceptionally powerful. Boating was a favourite amusement; he liked to row in a small boat, or paddle a canoe, and the Emperor passed hours and hours on the water when the Imperial Family were staying at Shker, in Finland.

Both the Emperor and the Empress disliked the Kaiser. I say this with perfect sincerity, and in all truth. They rarely mentioned his name before the war, and I know that his love of theatrical displays appealed to neither of them. In 1903 the Emperor William arrived in his yacht at Reval to witness a military review. The "Standart" with the Emperor of Russia aboard was also at Reval. After the Kaiser had paid a formal call on the Emperor, signals passed between the two yachts.

"What's all this?" asked the Emperor.

An officer enlightened him.

"Your Majesty," said he, "the signal from the 'Hohenzollern' says: 'The Emperor of the Atlantic salutes the Emperor of the Pacific.'"

The Emperor looked cross.

"Oh, that's it—well reply 'Thank you'—that's quite enough."

The Kaiser did not shine as a visitor to the "Standart"; the first thing he did was to shake hands indiscriminately, a proceeding which caused much amusement and confusion, and everyone was heartily glad when the "Emperor of the Atlantic" took his departure.

The Grand Duchesses disliked any mention of the Kaiser, but some of the officers used to tease them about him. The usual question of any privileged arrival at Tsarkoe Selo was: "Well, how is Uncle Willie to-day?" And the invariable answer was: "No—no—he's not our Uncle Willie—we don't want to hear his name."

Russia has been described as a country of tears and misery during the war, but this is incorrect. The peasants were never so rich as at this time, and there was no discontent in the country districts; the wives received big allowances, and they earned extra money for themselves without any difficulty. Every boy indulged in high patent-leather boots, every girl spent money on dress. There were certainly tears for the fallen, but there was no material misery in Russia.

The Emperor had made great plans to help those disabled in the service of their country. His idea was to give all wounded, disabled or decorated soldiers gifts of Crown Lands at the end of the war. He planned various land reforms, but the Revolutionaries incited the landlords against him by telling them that the Emperor was going to be generous at their expense, and not at his own!

It is impossible for an English public to realise the plots and counter-plots which existed in Russia. The Empress, on many occasions, barely escaped with her life ; she was unpopular with all classes, but she was unable, mercifully, to estimate the quality of the hatred meted out to her. I do not think there is a single charge that has not been laid at her door ; she is credited with hysteria, religious mania, pro-Germanism, the qualities of a Judas, the morals of a Messalina ; she has been described as the intriguing, strong-minded consort of a weak man, a willing tool of an infamous sensualist, as well as being a half-witch, and a half-mystic. The real Tsaritsa, firm in her convictions, the devoted wife, mother and friend, is unknown. Her acts of charity have been misconstrued, her religion has been made her shame, the very nationality which she so willingly relinquished has become an unmerited reproach. She knew and read all the reports concerning her, but, although anonymous letters sought to vilify her, and journalism bespattered her with filth, nothing touched her serenity of soul.

I have seen her grow pale, and I have watched her eyes slowly fill with tears when something exceptionally vile came under her notice. But Alexandra Feodrovna was able to see the stars shining far above the mud of the streets.



## CHAPTER V

I AM going to write of Gregory Rasputin as I knew him. My personal acquaintance with him lasted from 1910 to 1916, but I know that I might as well attempt to cleanse the Augean stables single-handed, as to be believed if I say one word in his defence. As a man, and as an infamous figure in history, he matters little to me, and, knowing the popular prejudice against him, I hesitated to mention his name in these pages. But I was urged to do so ; it was represented to me that my silence might be equivalent to an acknowledgment, not only of his guilt, but also of that of the Empress. This last consideration decided me to forgo my resolution, and to write a faithful record of the man who was supposed to play such an important rôle during the last few years of the Russian Empire.

If I say that I never saw the evil side of Gregory Rasputin I shall be called a liar or a fool—perhaps, more chivalrously, the latter. It is, however, the truth when I say that we never saw the evil side of him. May I, therefore, plead for a hearing on the grounds that some men possess dual natures, and that they adapt these to the company in which they find themselves ? I have heard of men who at home have led most moral lives, leading elsewhere existences before which an up-to-date French novel is as naught.

Yet they never betrayed themselves to their nearest and dearest. Their friends were likewise deceived. Perhaps this dark side was never discovered, and they died and were buried as undefiled Christians. But even if something unforeseen had disclosed the man's secret orchard, his inner life, and his frailties, their existence even then would most probably have been disbelieved by those who had known him intimately for years.

A person tells you that your dearest friend is a liar and a sensualist. Do you believe him? Rarely, I think, if you are worthy to call yourself a friend. You advise the traducer to make himself or herself scarce, and, if you allow your mind to become poisoned by slow dropping venom, you place yourself at once on a level with the slanderer.

The Empress refused to believe ill of Rasputin because she had never seen the evil side of him, and also because both she and the Emperor had extended the hand of friendship to him. There was no question of affection in her continual refusal to disown him, no phase of the passing passions which distinguished Catherine the Great, and which were so kindly tolerated by her subjects. The Empress inherited much of her illustrious grandmother's tenacity of purpose, and she refused to be dictated to. In this, she was the woman of character who resembled Queen Victoria. I do not wish to compare Rasputin with John Brown—they are as the poles apart—but what I wish to point out in connection with both of these persons, is that Queen Victoria and the Empress called John Brown and Gregory Rasputin

their friends, and neither family disapproval nor public censure was a sufficient reason in their eyes to merit the sacrifice of a friend. There the similarity ends.

Gregory Rasputin arrived in Petrograd from Siberia on a pilgrimage, walking the entire way with irons on his body in order to make his progress more painful and difficult. If a pilgrim were to arrive in London from Edinburgh in similar circumstances he would be taken before a magistrate, and most probably sent to a lunatic asylum ; these things do not happen in England, but they were of daily occurrence in Russia. We were so accustomed to the miraculous that I do not think the average Russian would have manifested any surprise if he had been accosted in the street by the Angel Gabriel !

Rasputin had been introduced by certain people to Germogen, a priest and a friend of Elidor, who possessed great influence in the region of the Volga. Elidor's dominant idea was to found a particular sect of his own, but he failed to do so, and he was ultimately dismissed from authority. This, he attributed, rightly or wrongly, to Rasputin. Germogen was a firm believer in Rasputin's spiritual powers, and he was also much interested in his arduous pilgrimage. In fact, so greatly was he impressed that he decided to introduce the "staretz " to the Grand Duchess Peter, formerly Princess Meliza of Montenegro, and to her sister the Grand Duchess Anastasia, the wife of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Both these Princesses were addicted to mysticism ; I may describe them as "souful." Rasputin impressed them equally as much as he had impressed Germogen,



and they talked everywhere about their wonderful "discovery."

At this time the two Grand Duchesses were on very friendly terms with the Empress, and it is not to be wondered that, little by little, her curiosity was aroused, and at last she and the Emperor expressed a wish to see Rasputin.

The "staretz" was in due course presented to Their Majesties. Once again I repeat that such things could only happen in Russia, and it is therefore impossible to judge the Rasputin affair from an English standpoint. This uncouth peasant who came into the presence of Their Majesties barefooted, wearing the clumsy irons of penance, was in nowise impressed by his surroundings—he spoke freely to the Emperor, who was struck, like many others, by Rasputin's sincerity. The interview was not productive of any notable result, so far as Rasputin was concerned; it was merely an interesting incident, and when I first knew the Empress she never mentioned the name of Rasputin.

In my opinion, and I speak in all sincerity, I believe that Rasputin was the unconscious tool of the Revolution. If John of Cronstadt had lived in 1910 to 1916, he would have been called another Rasputin. It was necessary for the Revolutionaries to find someone whose name they could couple with that of the Empress—a name whose connection with the Imperial Family would destroy their prestige with the higher classes, as well as nullifying the veneration of the peasant class. A member of the Duma once heckled one of the Revolutionary party on the question of Rasputin:



H.I.M. THE TSAR

Surrounded by the Officers of the  
Royal Yacht 'Standart'



THE EMPRESS

On board the Royal Yacht  
'Standart'



H.I.M. THE TSAR WITH THE TSAREVITCH

On board the Tender going out to the Royal Yacht 'Standart'





"Why," said he, "don't you kill Rasputin if you are so against him?"

He received this surprising but wholly truthful reply :

"Kill Rasputin ! Why, we should like him to live for ever ! He represents our salvation !"

Rasputin's position was many-sided. One section of Society looked upon him as a "cult," and I have no doubt that there was a certain pathological interest in this. Another group formed a mystical conception of him as a "teacher," and a more material clique courted him, hoping thereby to gain influence with the Empress. The shame lies not so much with Rasputin as with those who "exploited" him.

At one time Rasputin was the guest of a well-known general, but, when this gentleman discovered that there was nothing to be gained by his hospitality, he quickly dropped his one-time acquaintance, and Rasputin took up his quarters in a small flat where he was supported by voluntary contributions. It was a humble abode, the "staretz" lived on the meanest food, and it was only during the last year of his life that he received presents of wine.

Anna Virouboff met Rasputin for the first time when she had just made up her mind to leave her husband. As I have said, her marriage with Lieutenant Virouboff had turned out disastrously, and their relations terminated in a most distressing manner. It so happened that once, when Anna was entertaining the Empress and General Orloff, Lieutenant Virouboff arrived unexpectedly from sea, and, as the police did not recognise him, he was refused admittance to his

own house. There was a terrible scene between him and his wife after the Empress left, and Anna was beaten unmercifully. Anna then refused to live with him any longer, and returned to her parents. This affair created a great scandal, and, in order to console Anna, the "Montenegrin" Grand Duchesses took her to see Rasputin.

I cannot say whether or no this was a mistake. I am inclined to think that it was a well-meant error, as Anna Virouboff was a super-sensitive, rather neurotic person, easily impressed by an effective *mise en scène*. And this *mise en scène* was amply provided for her. The heart-broken and insulted young wife was received at the Palace of the Grand Duchess Anastasia with immense ceremony, and what took place is best described as an emotional prayer meeting.

Suddenly a door opened and Gregory Rasputin made his appearance. He walked into the midst of the overwrought worshippers, untouched by their exaltation. He radiated peace, and he personified the Strong Man beloved as an ideal by the majority of women. To Anna, the shattered and the disillusioned, Rasputin typified the calm that comes after a great storm; he prayed with her, he consoled her, she felt that she could confide in him. She was utterly oblivious of the social gulf which separated them. Rasputin was something to lean on, and Anna always leant on somebody; this weak, lovable, credulous creature was unable to stand alone. And in this way their intimacy began. I am sure that Anna was never in love with the *man* (although she was always in love with someone), but his chief influence over her was that of the priest.

I believe that at this time the Empress saw Rasputin occasionally, but he was chiefly to be found in the company of the two Grand Duchesses who had "discovered" him, and who now reported that Rasputin was undoubtedly a "seer." This annoyed the Emperor, and, the next time he saw Rasputin, he asked him to tell him *how* he "saw" true.

"Your Majesty, I know nothing of clairvoyancy," said Rasputin.

"Then why have the Grand Duchesses asserted that you possess clairvoyant gifts?" replied the Emperor, crossly; and, when the Empress put the same question to Rasputin, she received the same reply.

The real reason for this report will never be known. It was in all probability political, but, after Rasputin had disowned clairvoyancy, the two Grand Duchesses disowned their protégé and sided with Germogen against him. The commencement of endless intrigues dates from this period, as Elidor and Germogen were afraid that Rasputin would become more important than themselves.

I must now deal with Rasputin's alleged influence over the Empress. There is no doubt that her subconscious belief in his spiritual powers was confirmed by the long arm of coincidence. The Tsarevitch fell ill, the attack was severe and his parents were frantic. If any mother with an only son reads these pages, she will admit that the word "frantic" best describes the feelings of a mother at such a crisis. The Empress was literally beside herself; it was then that someone suggested that Rasputin should be



sent for. When he arrived he bade the despairing parents hope. He prayed by the bedside of the Tsarevitch, and it seemed that directly he did so the child began to get better. There is not the slightest truth in the film and "novel" versions of the incident; coincidence, and coincidence alone, was responsible for the Tsarevitch's recovery at the moment of Rasputin's impassioned prayers.

I met Rasputin just before the Germogen scandals. My husband had gone to Copenhagen to escort the Empress Marie thither on the "Pole Star," and he was anxious for me to join him. To do this would have entailed leaving Titi with my mother, and I was reluctant to do so, although naturally desirous of acceding to my husband's wishes. Thus I was in somewhat of a dilemma. Anna noticed I was worried and unhappy.

"Look here, Lili, there's someone who can help you," she said.

"Who?" I asked.

"Gregory Rasputin," she answered.

I was not anxious to meet Rasputin—I did not possess the boundless belief in him which characterised Anna, but I agreed, to humour her, and she took me to Rasputin's eyrie (I say eyrie, since his flat was high up under the roof), and then left me.

I waited for some time alone in a little study until a man came in so noiselessly that I was almost unaware of his presence. It was Rasputin! Our eyes met, and I was instantly struck by his uncanny appearance. At a first glance, he appeared to be a typical peasant from the frozen North, but his eyes held mine, those shining steel-like eyes which seemed to read one's inmost thoughts. His face was pale and thin, his hair

long, and his beard a lighter chestnut. Rasputin was not tall, but he gave one the impression of being so; he was dressed as a Russian peasant, and wore the high boots, loose shirt and long, black coat of the moujik. He came forward and took my hand.

"Ah . . . I see. Thou art worried." (He "tutoyed" everybody). "Well—nothing in life is worth worrying over—'tout passe'—you understand—that's the best outlook."

He became serious.

"It is necessary to have Faith. God alone is thy help. Thou art torn between thy husband and thy child. Which of them is the weaker? Thou think'st that thy child is the more helpless. This is not so. A child can do nothing in his weakness—a man can do much."

Rasputin advised me to go to Copenhagen, but I did not go. I left Petrograd next day for the country—perhaps out of bravado! But the impression which Rasputin had produced on me was very vivid. I was at once attracted, repelled, disquieted and reassured; nevertheless, his eyes were productive of a feeling of terror and repugnance, and I made no answer when the Empress greeted me with the words: "So, Lili, you've seen our friend? He'll always help you."

My second meeting with Rasputin took place in the winter. Titi was seriously ill, it was thought that diphtheric conditions would set in, and the poor little boy lay tossing from side to side in delirium. Anna, who made constant enquiries, at last 'phoned. "Lili," she said, "my advice is—ask Gregory to come and pray." I hesitated—I knew my husband's distaste for anything

touching the supernatural. But, when I saw how ill Titi was, I hesitated no longer. At any rate, no one could possibly condemn the prayers offered for a sick child. Rasputin promised to come at once, and he arrived in company with an old woman who was dressed as a nun. This quaint creature refused to enter the boy's bedroom, and sat on the stairs, praying.

"Don't wake Titi," I whispered, as we entered the nursery, for I was afraid that the sudden appearance of this strange peasant might frighten the child. Rasputin made no reply, but sat down by the bedside and looked long and intently at the sleeper. He then knelt and prayed. When he rose from his knees he bent over Titi.

"Don't wake him," I repeated.

"Silence—I *must*."

Rasputin placed a finger on either side of Titi's nose. The child instantly awoke, looked at the stranger unafraid, and addressed him by the playful name which Russian children give to old people. Rasputin talked to him, and Titi told him that his head ached "ever so badly."

"Never mind," said Rasputin, his steel eyes full of strange lights. Then, addressing me: "To-morrow thy child will be well. Let me know if this is not so." And, bidding us farewell, he departed with his odd escort.

Directly Rasputin had gone the child fell asleep, and the next morning the threatened symptoms had disappeared, and his temperature was normal. In a few days, greatly to the doctor's amazement, he was quite well. After this, I could hardly dispute Rasputin's peculiar powers, and I



always saw him whenever he came to the Palace—this, on an average, about once a month.

It is only fair to Rasputin to say that he derived no material benefits from these visits, in fact, he once complained to me that he was never even given his cab-fares !

Rasputin's influence over the Empress was purely mystical. She had always believed in the power of prayer—Rasputin strengthened her in this belief, and I am sure that her perplexed soul was soothed by his ministrations. There was absolutely no sensual attraction. It gives me intense pain to touch on this subject, but I must not shrink from what I consider to be my duty. I have heard the most dreadful stories of the Empress—how, in the spirit of sacrifice she gave herself, and those dear children to Rasputin, in order to prove that the sacrifice of the body was acceptable to God. Such a monstrous thing never happened. But when I have defended her, and said that Rasputin was a common man, unpleasing to look on, dirty in his habits and uncouth in every respect, I have been told that these defects matter nothing in certain types of sensualism. I have put forward the indisputable fact that the Empress was an intensely fastidious woman, that she possessed no “animal” propensities, that her morals were the ultra-strict morals of her grandmother. The answer to this has been that many fastidious and super-moral women have been guilty of incomprehensible lapses, solely by reason of their fastidious and moral qualities. If such examples exist, why should not the Empress have done likewise ?

I am confronted at every turn by these reports,

and people say pityingly : " Well, of course, you *loved* the Empress." That is so . . . but *I also knew* the Empress. The Emperor's attitude in the Rasputin scandal ought alone to destroy these accusations, as the Empress never saw Rasputin without the knowledge and consent of her husband. Even assuming Nicholas II to be a weak man, entirely under the domination of his wife, he would certainly have been man enough, husband enough, and father enough, never to have countenanced any immoral relations between Rasputin and his family. The Emperor was primarily a Christian and a gentleman, but he was likewise a Romanoff and an Emperor. In these capacities he would have meted out the only possible punishment for such an offence. When he was told the " outside " scandals concerning Rasputin, he would not credit them. And why not ? *Simply because they were so bad* ; had they been less so, the Emperor might have listened. It is a great mistake for anyone to attempt to destroy any friendship by describing the person whose ruin is contemplated as being entirely worthless. The desired result is obtained far more easily by damning him or her with faint praise !

When various people reproached the Empress for being on terms of friendship with a common peasant, and for believing that he was endowed with the attributes of holiness, she replied that Our Lord did not choose well-born members of Jewish society for His followers. All His disciples except St. Luke were men of humble origin. I am inclined to think that she placed Rasputin on a level with St. John . . . both were, in her opinion, mystics.

She was perfectly frank in her belief in Rasputin's powers of healing. The Empress was convinced that certain individuals possess this gift, and that Rasputin was one. When it was urged that the services of the most skilled physicians were at her disposal, she gave the invariable answer: "I believe in Rasputin." As for the stories that Rasputin and Anna Virouboff gave the Tsarevitch poisons and antidotes, I dismiss these with contempt—they belong solely to sensational fiction. Anna Virouboff would have been too frightened to give a kitten a dose of medicine, much less would she have tampered with the medicines given to the Tsarevitch.

The first grave scandal which assailed the Empress in connection with Rasputin was the discovery and publication of a letter written by her, in which she made use of the expression: "*Je veux reposer mon âme auprès de vous.*" The enemies of Rasputin were fully aware that he was guilty of the fatal habit of keeping interesting letters, so Rasputin (always desirous of popularity) was invited to meet certain influential people, and, on his way to the rendezvous, he was attacked and robbed, and all the correspondence which he carried on him was stolen.

In due time the contents of the Empress's letter were published, and this did her tremendous harm. Even the Duma took the worst view of the much quoted sentence, "*Je veux reposer mon âme auprès de vous.*" But that expression was not used at all in the physical meaning. The Empress merely wished to tell her friend that her soul was desirous of spiritual consolation.



Since I have lived in England, I have constantly met women who pin their faith in certain spiritual and physical advisers. Most Catholics have a special confessor to whom they invariably repair, just as most people have one particular doctor in whom they trust—most representatives of any denomination have their especial following. It is solely a question of one individual meeting the requirements of another.

The Emperor was very much troubled over the attacks which were made on the Empress. But both he and the Empress possessed a mistaken sense of their responsibilities in connection with Rasputin, and this mistaken sense of responsibility was to prove the ultimate destruction of both Rasputin and themselves. The Imperial couple resolutely refused to throw him over. In this decision the Emperor was as one with the Empress ; perhaps they “humanly” declined to admit the right of anyone to dictate to them . . . but, be that as it may, Rasputin’s position remained undisturbed.

It is well known that Rasputin condemned hostilities, but it is not equally well known that he tried to stop the declaration of war. Nevertheless, when mobilization began, he wired to Anna, saying : “The war must be stopped—war must *not* be declared ; it will be the end of all things.” No notice whatever was taken of this telegram, for the excellent reason that Rasputin’s political influence was *nil* ; he had, in fact, no influence in material matters, although many have thought otherwise.

General Beletsky once asked Rasputin to speak to the Emperor and suggest his name as

Governor-General of Finland. Rasputin promised to do so, and mentioned the matter to the Emperor, in the presence of the Empress. The Emperor listened, but made no comment. General Beletsky was never appointed.

It seems impossible to obtain a logical hearing on behalf of either the Empress or Rasputin. All kinds of reports have been circulated in connection with the latter's excesses and debaucheries. There may have been some truth that Rasputin's private life was not all that it should have been, but I assert most solemnly that we never saw the slightest trace of impropriety in word, manner or behaviour when he was with us at Tsarkoe Selo.

Prince Orloff, the head of the Chancellerie Militaire, never made any pretence of liking or even tolerating the Empress. He experienced a sort of nervous repugnance to meeting her, and it was common knowledge that he took quantities of valerian in order to steady his nerves, whenever it was necessary for him to see her. The Empress was aware of this.

"I saw Prince Orloff to-day," she said to me, "he was reeking of valerian. Poor man, what an effort it must cost him to speak to me."

The Prince exercised no discretion whatever in his statements about the Empress and Rasputin; he seemed impelled to disparage her—his hatred amounted almost to a 'phobia—and at last the Emperor lost patience with him and sent him to the Caucasus.

Princess Olga Orloff was received shortly afterwards by the Empress. The Empress was very fond of Olga, but it was a very unpleasant

interview, as the Princess tried to explain that her husband had been grossly maligned. The Empress described the interview to me:

"I've had a dreadful time, Lili," she said, "Olga Orloff has just been. I'm very, very sorry for her, she's in a terrible state. When I rose, she began to speak most wildly, and to insist that her husband was devoted to me and to our interests. I knew that, if I were to sit down, I should burst into tears; so I kept standing. It was an awful moment."

Rasputin always had a presentiment of a violent death. He often remarked, with an air of profound conviction: "Whilst I'm alive all will be well, but, after my death, rivers of blood will flow. Nothing, however, will happen to 'Father' and 'Mother'"—this was his way of alluding to the Emperor and Empress. About this time an old woman, a disciple of Elidor's, came to see Rasputin one night, wearing a white dress plentifully trimmed with scarlet ribbons.

Rasputin reproved her for this display.

"How awful of you to wear these red ribbons," he said.

"Ah," replied the old woman. "I *know* why I wear red."

"And she knew full well," said Rasputin, gloomily, when describing the incident to me. "Red is the colour of blood—and blood will soon be as plentiful as her scarlet ribbons."

Everyone who loved the Imperial Family was horrified at the ever increasing scandals; the wildest reports, mostly lies, with a substratum of truth were current, and Rasputin was even said to have been sinning in Petrograd



when he was actually in Siberia. It was impossible to persuade the Empress that popular feeling was against her. True, she heard what was said, and she occasionally read what was imputed to her, but she paid no attention to gossip or to mendacious paragraphs. She was obsessed by her religion, and she sent me and Anna Virouboff on a pilgrimage to Tobolsk in the summer of 1916. A new saint had been recently canonized at Tobolsk, and the Empress had made a vow to go thither herself, or to send a substitute. Anna asked me to consent, as she was afraid to travel alone, and, as the Empress begged me to go, I could do no less than prove my devotion to her wishes.

When I arrived at Petrograd I discovered that Rasputin was to travel with us. I could not help thinking that, in view of popular feeling, it was most ill-advised to advertise the expedition, but I dared not suggest this. We left Petrograd in the greatest publicity. . . . A special saloon carriage was attached to the train . . . it was a progress of publicity, wires were sent in advance all along the line to announce our advent, and crowds thronged the stations to catch a glimpse of us.

At last, late in the evening, we arrived at Tumen, and from thence we took the steamer to Tobolsk. Little did I dream that, in a year's time, the Imperial Family were to make the same pilgrimage—of which the whole journey was to prove indeed a *Via Dolorosa*! They, too, were to see the black and swiftly flowing river, and the wild Tartar villages on its banks, and, like myself, they were to see the city on the mountain, with its

churches and houses sharply silhouetted against the fast darkening sky.

We were received at Tobolsk by the Governor, the chief officials, and the Church dignitary, Varnava, and we were afterwards taken to our quarters in the Governor's house, where I slept in the little room which the Emperor, a year later, used as his study.

The next day we visited the saint's grave, and attended a very impressive service in the Cathedral. Rasputin stayed with the priest, but, unfortunately, he quarrelled with Varnava, so matters became somewhat strained, and I was not sorry when our two days' visit came to an end.

On the way back to Tumen, Rasputin made a point of us stopping at his village and seeing his wife. I was rather intrigued at this, as I had always wondered how and where he lived, and I felt quite interested when I saw the dark grey, carved wooden house which was the home of Rasputin. The village consisted of a group of small wooden houses built on two floors. Rasputin's house was, perhaps, a little larger than the others, and he said that he hoped one day Their Majesties would visit him.

"But it's too far," I said—aghast at the proposal.

Rasputin was angry. "They *must*," he declared, and, a few minutes afterwards, he added the prophetic words: "Willing or unwilling, they will come to Tobolsk, and they will see my village before they die."

We remained one day at Rasputin's house. His wife was a charming, sensible woman, and the peasants were a fine type—honest, simple folk, who

cultivated the fields belonging to Rasputin, and accepted no payment for so doing—working absolutely in the spirit of holiness.

Rasputin had three children—the two girls were being educated in Petrograd, but the boy was quite a peasant. Everyone was friendly, but most of the villagers were strongly against Rasputin's returning to Petrograd.

As we had decided to go on to Ekaterinburg, and from thence to the Convent of Verchoutouria, I thought it would be a good idea to persuade Rasputin to remain with his people. This he refused to do ; I told Anna that there must be no more gossip, and that she must persuade Rasputin to leave us. She promised to do so, but at the last moment he went with us to Ekaterinburg.

I shall never forget my first impression of this fatal town. Directly we got out of the train, I felt a sense of calamity—we were all affected ; Rasputin was ill at ease, Anna perceptibly nervous, and I was heartily glad when we reached the Convent of Verchoutouria, which is situated on the left bank of the river Toura. We stayed a night in the guest house attached to the Convent, and then Rasputin asked us to go into the woods with him and visit a hermit who was locally supposed to be a very holy man.

This pilgrimage must appear entirely foolish in the eyes of English readers. I try and put myself in their place, and imagine what the English public would think if the "Daily Mail" announced that Queen Mary had sent two of her friends on such an expedition.

"This couldn't happen—Queen Mary is far too sensible," you will say.



No doubt Queen Mary *is* far too sensible . . . such a thing could never happen in England, and I am only relating it in order to prove that, once again, it is impossible to judge Russia from an English standpoint.

The hermit lived in the heart of the forest and his hermitage might easily have been taken for a poultry farm. He was surrounded by fowls of all sizes and descriptions. Perhaps he considered fowls akin to holiness; he gave quantities of eggs to the Convent, but we supped frugally off cold water and black bread. The hermit had no use for beds, so we slept miserably on the hard, unyielding floor of dried mud, and I must confess that I was glad when we returned to Verchoutouria and we were able to sleep and bath in comfort.

Rasputin decided to take leave of us at Verchoutouria, so we went on alone to Perm, where our saloon carriage was coupled to another train. Crowds came to stare at Anna, and some of their comments made me feel very uneasy. There was much dissatisfaction, and, when our saloon was uncoupled, it was done so forcibly that the carriage was almost derailed, and I was thrown from one end to the other. But we returned to Petrograd safely, there to be welcomed and thanked by the Empress.

"After all, Lili," said Anna, now prostrate with nerves and a heart attack, "we must believe that God *likes* us to endure."

I do not know whether this remark was reminiscent of the hermitage, or of the saloon carriage, but I was able honestly to thank God that I was once more within a civilized area.

Rasputin did not stay long in his village ; he returned to Petrograd, and the brazen voice of scandal was again heard. One day, in 1916, when I was at Reval, the Empress telegraphed asking me to come and see her.

I obeyed, and found her alone, looking sad, and obviously much troubled in her mind. She did not, at first, touch on the subject nearest her heart ; then, all at once, she told me how hard she thought it of people to speak against her so bitterly.

" I know *all*, Lili," she said. " Why does Gregory stop in Petrograd ? The Emperor doesn't wish it. I don't. And yet we can't possibly discard him—he's done no wrong. Oh, why won't he see his folly ? "

" I'll do all in my power, Madame, to make him do so," I replied. My heart overflowed with love for the Empress, she seemed so utterly broken, so tragically sad.

" I've already reproached Anna for not helping me in the matter," continued the Empress, and she gave me her permission to go at once to the house in Gorohovaya Street where Rasputin lived. I went with Anna.

We did not find Rasputin alone. It was tea time and he was surrounded by a little crowd of admirers. Next to him sat his *âme damnée*, Akilina Laptinsky, the secret agent, under whose skilful tutelage Rasputin unconsciously played the well-planned game of the Revolutionaries. Akilina posed as a Sister of Charity, and many people believed in her ; she possessed great influence with Rasputin, and in his unguarded moments he made many deplorable confidences in Akilina, who used

everything she heard in a way detrimental to the Imperial Family.

Akilina disliked me: she thought Anna was a weak fool, but I imagine that she regarded me as a foe more worthy of her steel. I acknowledged her presence, and I asked Rasputin if I could speak to him in private.

"But certainly," he answered, and we went into the next room, Akilina following us.

"And now?" enquired Rasputin, seating himself.

I did not mince matters.

"Gregory," I said bluntly, "you must leave Petrograd at once. You can pray for Their Majesties equally well in Siberia. You *must* go—for their sakes, I implore you. Go— You know what is said—if you insist upon remaining, it will only mean danger for us all."

Rasputin considered me gravely—he did not speak. I could see Anna's "hurt child" look; I could feel Akilina's sinister scrutiny. Then Rasputin uttered these unexpected words:

"Perhaps thou art right. I'm sick and tired of it all. I'll go."

But a surprising interruption occurred. Akilina banged her clenched fist on the table, and confronted me with rage in her eyes.

"How *dare* you try and control the Father's spirit?" she screamed. "I say that he *must* stay. Who are you?—why, a nobody—you are too insignificant to judge what is best for anyone."

Silence, pregnant with meaning, fell in the little room. Anna was crying, Rasputin said nothing, but I still defied Akilina: the thought of the Empress gave me courage.



"Are you going to listen to the Sister?" I demanded coldly.

Akilina recommenced her table-banging.

"If you leave Petrograd, Father, you'll have bad luck—you are *not* to go."

"Well—well—" said Rasputin helplessly, "perhaps thou art right. I shall stay."

My efforts were unavailing. Rasputin could be as obstinate as a mule; and so, greatly distressed, I returned to the Palace. The Empress was very disappointed.

"I wonder why the Sister was so against my wishes," she said.

Later on we understood. I think that, despite her plotting and contriving, Akilina really had some affection for Rasputin, and she was occasionally ashamed of her Judas-like rôle. I remember that once, when Rasputin left Petrograd on a visit to his family, I went to see him off, and there, naturally, I encountered Akilina. As the train steamed out of the station she burst into tears—genuine tears; I saw there was no hypocrisy in her grief. Although I disliked Akilina, I felt sorry for her.

"You'd better let me drive you home," I said.

She accepted my offer, but in the car her tears recommenced.

"Whatever is the matter?" I enquired.

"You'll see the Father again."

Akilina raised her tear-drenched eyes.

"Ah—you know *nothing*—if you only knew—if you only knew what I know."

Surely this remark must have implied that she possessed some inner knowledge which terrified her, and which may have made her conscience-stricken.

Akilina nursed Anna at Tsarkoe Selo when she was ill with the measles, but on the second day of the Revolution she sent me a note, asking me to come over to the left wing of the Palace. She then informed me that Anna was delirious. . . .

"However, I can't do much for her. Will you tell Her Majesty that I must go into town for a day. I want to see Gregory's family."

I promised to deliver the message, but we never saw Akilina again. A fortnight later we were told that she was living in the family of one of the most prominent Revolutionaries.

Another "Sister," Voskoboinikova, equally associated with Rasputin, was head matron of Anna's hospital. She was, likewise, a great friend of M. Protopopoff, the Minister of the Interior, who used to spend hours in her company. Voskoboinikova possessed a certain fascination, but she was very inquisitive, and we equally disliked each other. Following the example of Akilina, she left Tsarkoe on the second day of the Revolution, but, the night before relinquishing her position at the hospital, she gave a dinner to the convalescent soldiers, when wine flowed freely and all sorts of seditious speeches were made. The soldiers were told to look to Petrograd for freedom, and that revolvers and bullets were fine things. Truly women had their uses during the Revolution!

But to return to Rasputin. The feeling against him daily assumed larger proportions. Elidor once sent a woman to kill him, and the Father was badly wounded in the stomach, but it is untrue to say that Anna Virouboff nursed him during the illness which ensued. She never attempted to do so.

Prince Felix Yousopoff, whose name will always be connected with the tragedy of Rasputin, first met him at the house of Mme Golovina, a sister-in-law of the Grand Duke Paul. The demoiselle Golovina greatly admired Felix Yousopoff, in fact her "flamme" for him was well known. Some considerable time elapsed between the first meeting of Prince Felix and Rasputin : I spent the next two years chiefly in Reval, but I used to pay a fortnightly visit to the Empress, and, after my husband was sent to England, I went to Petrograd, where I saw the Empress daily. I was very surprised when she told me that Felix Yousopoff was a constant visitor at Rasputin's house ; in fact I was so incredulous that I asked Rasputin whether this was true.

" Yes—it's quite true," he answered, " I have a great affection for Prince Yousopoff, I never call him anything else but ' Little One.' "

Mary Golovina, to whom also I expressed my astonishment, said that Prince Yousopoff declared that Rasputin's prayers benefited him : so there was nothing more to be said.

On December 16th, when I was at Tsarkoe Selo, I told the Empress that I wanted to see Rasputin on the morrow, but just before starting for his house—about five o'clock on the afternoon of December 17th—I was rung up from Tsarkoe Selo—the Empress wished to speak to me. Her voice seemed agitated.

" Lili," she said, " don't go to Father Gregory's to-day. Something strange has happened. He disappeared last night—nothing has been heard of him, but I'm sure it will be all right. Will you come to the Palace at once ? "



Thoroughly startled by this disturbing news, I lost no time in taking the train to Tsarkoe Selo. An Imperial carriage was waiting for me, and I soon found myself at the Palace.

The Empress was in her mauve boudoir ; once again I felt the premonition of coming disaster, but I endeavoured to disregard it. Never did the "cabinet mauve" look so home-like. The air was sweet with the fragrance of many flowers and the clean odour of burning wood ; the Empress was lying down, the Grand Duchesses sat near her, and Anna Virouboff was sitting on a footstool close to the couch. The Empress was very pale—her blue eyes were full of trouble, the young girls were silent, and Anna had evidently been weeping. I heard all there was to tell me ; Gregory had disappeared, but I believe the Empress never imagined for one moment that he was dead. She discountenanced any sinister conjectures ; she soothed the ever weeping Anna, and then she told me what she wished me to do.

"You will sleep in Anna's house to-night," she said. "I want you to see people for me to-morrow—I am advised that it will be better for me not to do so."

I told the Empress that I was only too happy to be of service to her, and, after dinner, I went to Anna's house, which I was astonished to find in the occupation of the Secret Police !

The pretty little dining room was full of police agents, who received me most courteously, explaining that their presence was accounted for by the fact that a plot to kill the Empress and Anna Virouboff had just been discovered. This was

not reassuring, but I decided not to be nervous, and, bidding good night to the officers of justice, I went into Anna's bedroom.

The familiar room looked strangely unfamiliar—terror lurked in the shadows, and death seemed in the air. I am not by nature superstitious, but I must confess that I felt so when an ikon suddenly fell down with a crash, carrying a portrait of Rasputin with it in its fall. I hastily undressed and got into bed—I could not sleep; I lay awake for hours, and when, towards dawn, I dropped off in an uneasy slumber, I was suddenly aroused by what seemed a great noise outside. I heard in the distance the tread of countless feet, the sound of many voices; a mighty multitude was marching towards Tsarkoe Selo—and the dreadful thought flashed across my mind that perhaps there had been a rising at Petrograd. I jumped out of bed, threw on a wrapper, and rushed to the dining-room. There all was quiet; the police officers were sleeping on the floor. My entrance awakened them.

"Why, madame, what's the matter?" they enquired.

"Cannot you hear for yourselves?" I said, impatiently, "the noise—the crowd—I'm sure something dreadful has happened at Petrograd."

"We have heard nothing. . . ."

"Oh, but I assure you it's correct."

The police opened the shutters, then the windows . . . outside all was still with the intense stillness of a winter's night. The officers made no comment, and closed the windows.

"Madame has perhaps been dreaming," said

one, sympathetically. "She has had much to try her nerves."

But I knew differently. I had certainly experienced much to try my nerves, but what I heard was neither a nightmare nor a delusion. When I re-entered the sombre bedroom, with its fallen ikon and its fallen saint, I shuddered, for, although I knew it not, the veil had been lifted, and I had heard the fast approaching footsteps of Revolution and murder.

I was an early arrival at the Palace, but the Empress was already up and she greeted me most affectionately. She told me that M. Protopopoff had strongly urged her to receive no one: there was evidence of a plot to murder her, and, for the first time, she seemed to feel some misgivings concerning the fate of Rasputin. She manifested no anxiety about her own danger; she was utterly serene and fearless: I was so struck by this that I could not help saying:

"Oh, Madame, you don't seem afraid to die. I always dread death—I'm a horrible coward."

The Empress looked at me in astonishment.

"Surely, Lili, you are not *really* afraid to die?"

"Yes, Madame, I am."

"I cannot understand anyone being afraid to die," she said, quietly. "I have always looked upon Death as such a friend, such a *rest*. You mustn't be afraid to die, Lili."

I passed an anxious and exciting morning. I was besieged with visitors for Anna, and people who desired to see the Empress. I think my position gave rise to a great deal of jealousy in the Palace, as at this time the Empress made me the



sole medium of her wishes and no official etiquette was observed.

Nothing was heard of Rasputin, but all kinds of disturbing rumours were current. A certain person paid twenty-two visits to Tsarkoe Selo in one day, hopeful to see the Empress, but, acting on the advice of Protopopoff, she absolutely declined to receive him.

Two days later, Rasputin's body was discovered under the ice in the Neva. It was taken to a hospital close by, where an autopsy was performed. Rasputin had been wounded in the face and side, and there was a bullet wound in his back. His expression was peaceful, and the stiff fingers of one hand were raised in a gesture of benediction ; it was impossible to arrange the hand in a natural position ! The autopsy proved without a doubt that Rasputin was alive when he was thrown into the Neva !

The news of the murder caused the greatest consternation at the Palace—Anna Virouboff was prostrated with grief, and the Imperial Family were deeply concerned. The reports that the Empress gave way to violent hysterics are incorrect. It would be untrue to say that she was not inexpressibly shocked and grieved, but she displayed no untoward emotion. The Emperor was troubled, but his feelings arose more from the significance of Rasputin's death than from the actual death of the man : he realised that this murder was the first definite blow against the hitherto absolute power of the Tsar !

Akilina Laptinsky came to the Palace immediately after the autopsy had been performed : she wished, so she said, to discuss the question of

Rasputin's burial. She was received by the Empress; Anna and I were also present. The "Sister" first asked the Empress if she did not wish to see the corpse.

"Certainly not," replied the Empress—in a tone which admitted of no argument.

"But there is the question of the burial," said Akilina. "Gregory always wished to be buried at Tsarkoe Selo."

"Impossible . . . impossible . . ." cried the Empress. "The body had better be taken to Siberia and buried in the 'Father's' village."

Akilina wept. . . . She declared that Rasputin's spirit would never rest were he to be buried so far away from the Palace. The Empress hesitated. . . . I could see she was thinking that it would be equally as unfriendly to discard the dead as to discard the living. Anna, however, settled the question by proposing that Rasputin should be interred in the centre aisle of the new church adjoining her hospital for convalescents. The church and the hospital were being built on Anna's own property. . . . There could be no question of any scandal touching the Imperial Family. . . . This proceeding would only enable people to cast another stone at Anna's already shattered reputation.

"And . . . I care little for the opinion of the world," whimpered Anna, looking more than ever like a hurt baby.

So it was settled that Rasputin should be buried in Anna's church, and, as I attended the burial, I may say with absolute conviction that mine is a true account of the proceedings. I have been told, and I have read various wholly inaccur-

ate reports—the most prevalent being that Rasputin was buried secretly at dead of night in the Park at Tsarkoe Selo. Nothing of the kind. Rasputin's burial took place at 8 o'clock on the morning of December 22nd. The Empress asked me, on the preceding evening, to meet the Imperial Family by the graveside, and I promised to do so.

It was a glorious morning, the sky was a deep blue, the sun was shining, and the hard snow sparkled like masses of diamonds; everything spoke of peace, and I could hardly believe that I was about to witness the closing scene of one of the greatest scandals and tragedies in history. My carriage stopped on the road some distance from the Observatory, and I was directed to walk across a frozen field towards the unfinished church. Planks had been placed on the snow to serve as a footpath, and when I arrived at the church I noticed that a police motor-van was drawn up near the open grave. After waiting several moments, I heard the sound of sleigh-bells, and Anna Virouboff came slowly across the field. Almost immediately afterwards, a closed automobile stopped, and the Imperial Family joined us. They were dressed in mourning, and the Empress carried some white flowers; she was very pale but quite composed, although I saw her tears fall when the oak coffin was taken out of the police van. The coffin was perfectly plain. It bore no inscription, and only a cross outside it testified to the faith of the departed.

The ceremony proceeded—the burial service was read by the chaplain to the hospital, and, after the Emperor and Empress had thrown earth on the coffin, the Empress distributed her



flowers between the Grand Duchesses and ourselves, and we scattered them on the coffin.

When the last solemn words had been uttered, the Imperial Family left the church. Anna and I followed them. . . . Anna got into her sledge, I into my carriage. It was barely nine o'clock.

I looked back at the snowy fields, the bare walls of the unfinished church, and I thought of the murdered man who was sleeping there. I felt an immense pity for his fate, but, above all, I felt an immense pity and love for those who had believed in him and befriended him in defiance of the world, and on whose innocent shoulders the burden of his follies was destined to rest.

I have not attempted to introduce any picturesque imagery in my description of Rasputin's burial. I have stated the facts exactly as they occurred, and it now devolves upon me to contradict one of the most unjust accusations which have been made against the Empress in connection with the burial of Rasputin.

Several writers have asserted that, when Rasputin's remains were dug up after the Revolution, a holy image bearing the signatures of the Empress and the Grand Duchesses was discovered resting under the cheek of the dead man. The Empress has been credited with placing this image there herself, but this is not the case. The image (that of the Miraculous Virgin of Pskov) was one of several which the Empress brought back from Pskov when she and her daughters visited her hospital. The Empress purchased these images much in the same manner that visitors to Lourdes purchase souvenirs of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Imperial Family

wrote their names and the date in pencil on the base of all these souvenirs, which were given to various friends. Rasputin received one, and, when his body was placed in the coffin, Akilina, with some sinister motive, insisted upon the image being placed under his cheek, and she was, doubtless, responsible for the story that this was done by order of the Empress.

After Rasputin's death, his son and daughters came to Tsarkoe Selo and were received by the Empress. They related how, on the night of the murder, their father had received a message from Prince Yousopoff, asking him to come and see him. It appeared that Rasputin's daughters had some vague presentiment of ill, and begged their father to remain at home. He, however, insisted upon going to the "little one," and the finding of one of the goloshes which he wore on account of the deep snow was partly the means of discovering that foul play had taken place.

The family begged the Empress to avenge their father's death. She replied :

"I can promise you nothing. All rests with justice ; we cannot possibly interfere in any way for or against that which has taken place."

These were her actual words, and they must surely discredit the story that Prince Yousopoff and the Grand Duke Dmitry were victims of the vindictive spirit of the Empress.

Rasputin, as I knew him, was, I repeat, not the villain of the novel and the films. In my eyes he was an uneducated man with a mission ; he spoke an almost incomprehensible Siberian dialect, he could hardly read, he wrote like a child of four, and his manners were unspeakable. But he

possessed both hypnotic and spiritual forces, he believed in himself and he made others do so. I am not ignorant of what has been said concerning his abnormal animalism, his satyr-like sensualities, the nameless orgies in which young women and young girls gave themselves as willing victims to his lust. An English saying states that there is "no smoke without fire"—this may, perhaps, apply to Rasputin's sensual side, but never to the alleged extent. One woman in twenty may lose her sense of fitness and seek to mate with a man in an inferior station of life, but it is not an everyday occurrence. The reports about his dress and his extravagance are also very much exaggerated. Rasputin lived, and died, a poor man. He usually wore the dress of a peasant, and his wonderful jewelled cross only exists in the brains of novelists and journalists. Rasputin at first wore a simple copper cross, later he wore one of gold which he afterwards sent to the Emperor at the Stavka. This gift in Russia is usually unwelcome, as it signifies that you present with it the sorrows and sufferings synonymous with the Cross. The Emperor thought that Rasputin's cross was unlucky, so he gave it back to me, and asked me to give it to Anna. But Anna stubbornly refused to accept it, and I was at my wits' end to know what to do. I could not tell the Emperor that Anna would have none of Rasputin's cross—so I mislaid it, and I do not know what became of it. But I only saw the moral side of this apparently immoral man, and I was not alone in my conception of Rasputin's character. I know for a fact that many women of my world who had "affairs "



and many demi-mondaines were not dragged further into the mire by Rasputin, for—incredible as it may appear—his influence in such cases was often for the best.

I remember that I once met Rasputin when I was walking on the Morskaya with a brother-officer of Captain Dehn's. He eyed me severely, and, when I returned home, I found a message telling me to come and see him. Partly out of curiosity I obeyed, and, when I saw Rasputin, he demanded an explanation.

"Of what?" I asked.

"Oh . . . thou know'st well enough. Art *thou* going to follow the example of these frivolous Society women? Why art thou not walking with thy husband?"

He repeatedly said to women who sought his advice:

"If you mean to do wrong, first come and tell me."

So I can do no more than speak of Rasputin as I found him. If I had been a Rasputinière, or the victim of an abnormal passion, I should not be living happily with my husband, and Captain Dehn would never have countenanced any association with Rasputin if the latter had been guilty of immoralities at Tsarkoe Selo. His duty as a husband would have been greater than his devotion to the Imperial Family.

I cannot entirely defend the Empress's attitude. I love her, I reverence her memory, but I think she was, in many ways, perhaps, mistaken in her outlook. She argued, very rightly, that, even if she belonged to Russia, her soul belonged to God, and she had a perfect right to worship Him

exactly in what manner most appealed to her. I have mentioned her views as to position being no ban where the instruments of God were concerned. In a worldly sense this was impossible, especially in Russia, where humility appealed neither to the peasant nor to the higher classes. The religious "communism" of the Empress outraged their sense of fitness . . . the peasants could not understand one of their own class being on intimate terms with the Sovereigns . . . the higher classes were bitterly contemptuous.

Knowing the strong religious convictions of the Empress and the inborn characteristics of both classes, the Revolutionaries found in Rasputin a fitting agent of Imperial destruction.

The Greek Church is the most mediæval of religions . . . it is quite harmless, so to speak, when modern conditions are not introduced into its practice; but modernity, ever a fatal element in religion, is especially fatal to the Greek Church. The Empress would not understand this . . . her faith taught her to credit the existence of holy men, hermits, and seers—so, when Rasputin appeared in the character of one of these, she was not surprised, and she accepted the actuality of his heaven-sent mission, as the teachings of her Church bade her.

As I have stated, coincidence was largely responsible for the belief of the Empress in Rasputin's gift of healing. His prayers coincided with the recovery of the Tsarevitch—that child of many prayers. In her love for her son the Empress was *plus mère que mère*. I am likewise assured that there was no theatrical clap-trap in

Rasputin's association with Anna Virouboff. Had Anna possessed the brains of Akilina, I might not be so positive—but Anna was no *intrigante*; in the face of possible denunciation as a Russian Sapphira, I repeat my estimate of Anna Virouboff, i.e., *childish, harmless, weak*.

If the Empress were guilty of any glaring weakness, it was, paradoxically, that of stubbornness. She did not allow any interference in what she considered her own province. Her grandmother and the Prince Albert had tolerated none; her distant connection, Princess Clementine of Coburg, was ultra-obstinate; another of her connections, Ferdinand of Bulgaria, has also manifested the Coburg peculiarity. It is an interesting psychological study: in some of the family this trait is manifest in their undeviating pursuit of worldly ambition, in others it is apparent in their views of morality and domesticity. In the case of the Empress, morality, domesticity and religion were subjects in which she brooked no contradiction.

Had the Emperor been less religious, he might have (from a worldly point of view) influenced his wife to have seen less of Rasputin. But he made no attempt to interfere with her on religious questions, remembering perhaps how wholly she had relinquished the faith of her fathers to embrace his own. The Empress has been accused of contributing to the downfall of Russia through her association with Rasputin. The finger of scorn and hatred has pointed at her, and an almost universal voice has cried, "Thou art the Woman." But history, if not always just, is at least generous, and it may be that Alexandra



Feodorovna will one day be given the benefit of the doubt, and allowed to appeal against the sentence which has been passed on her. For many years prior to her advent as Empress of Russia, the movement for Freedom had been slowly but surely spreading over the entire country, and the creation of the Duma strengthened public opinion. But certain Revolutionaries—themselves as evil as their prototypes in the French Revolution—did not scorn to employ base agents in order to attain their base ends. These men used Rasputin—with what result is now apparent. But have the murders of Rasputin and the Empress cleansed Russia and enabled it to be rechristened Utopia ?

The ashes of Rasputin are scattered to the four winds, the blood of the innocent cries aloud to Heaven for vengeance ; but Russia—drunken with carnage, liberated from her ancient yoke, and delivered of her rulers—has as yet only produced Robespierres.

## CHAPTER VI

I HAVE dealt with the subject of Rasputin before touching on that of the War, but his name is also connected with the War, as he is supposed to have been a German spy, and to have encouraged the alleged pro-German leanings of the Empress. Although I shall always adhere to my original belief that Rasputin was an unconscious agent of the Revolutionaries, I cannot deny that he was against the War, and always desirous of peace, but this attitude was due to his own wishes and convictions. I asked Rasputin in 1915 when he thought the war would be over. "Not yet. . . . Don't expect the war to be over yet," he answered; and in 1916, when I returned from Reval, I asked the Empress the same question. "Not yet, Lili, not yet," she said. Both these replies might serve to show how little was the political influence either of the Empress or of Rasputin. As an individual, doubtless the Empress desired peace: as a Russian, she could not possibly have desired the victory of Germany.

There was great excitement in 1914 throughout Russia; everyone hoped that England would come in, especially in naval circles, who were well aware of the weakness of the Russian fleet.

The excitement increased when Russia became the ally of France. The Imperial band played the hymns of the Allies daily; there was no ques-

tion of pro-Germanism at Court—Russia, as befitting her great traditions, was fighting the good fight!

My husband was ordered to escort the Imperial Family to sea on the "Standart," and I knew that I must therefore spend my birthday without him. One evening, when we were sitting in the Park making plans for a belated celebration, my husband was accosted by one of the heads of his Department. "Dehn . . ." said he . . . "go at once to the Commander of the Port . . . you're wanted."

Upon his return my husband was very excited. "Lili," he cried, "I have received orders to join Admiral Essen's fleet. I must leave almost immediately." It was, indeed, "almost immediately," for at 3 a.m. my husband bade me good-bye.

The Empress sent me a note directly she knew that Charles had left. "I hope everything will be all right," she wrote. "Poor Lili, don't despair."

I tried *not* to despair, and, like most wives at this time, I kept a smiling face, although I was perilously near tears. Every day the Military Council was in consultation with the Emperor, and, on the evening before the declaration of war, I knew that mobilization had been decided upon.

The Emperor firmly believed that Russia was amply supplied with munitions. He had been assured on this point by the Grand Duke Nicholas and General Soukhomlinoff. Soukhomlinoff knew that the ammunition of the Russian army was insufficient, but he still continued to reassure the Emperor and the Allies. The Grand Duke Nicholas, who was far from blameless . . .



instigated a Special Commission under the presidency of the Grand Duke Serge, with the declared object of providing the army with the requisite munitions. But three months passed, and nothing was done. Even when certain supplies of munitions arrived at the Front, these were useless, as they would not fit the guns and musketry which required them! The Emperor was most unjustly blamed for these calamities—but he was guiltless—the real offenders were the Grand Duke Nicholas, General Soukhomlinoff and their agents.

On the day following my husband's departure the Empress sent me a message asking me to go with her to the church usually attended by the Lancers (the Empress's Own). The service was very impressive; I stood behind the Empress, who was praying ardently, and, at the conclusion, she turned to me: "Don't look sad, Lili," she whispered. "This war *had* to be."

Whenever the regiments of which the Empress was colonel left for the front, she saw the officers and soldiers, and blessed them and spoke to them. A great deal has been said and written about the Empress's unpopularity with the soldiers. I have hardly heard a good word on her behalf, and yet I know how devotedly she was loved by many of the officers and men. It will be my privilege to show how, during the Revolution, she received many touching evidences of their affection, and I am determined not to allow the Sisyphus weight of calumny to deter me from telling what I know of the truth.

After the declaration of hostilities the Empress at once instituted her own hospitals, and both

she and her daughters went in for a medical course to qualify as Sisters of Charity. Princess Gedroits, herself a professor of surgery, instructed them, and the Imperial Family gave up most of their time to lectures and demonstrations.

Directly they had passed the necessary examinations, the Empress and "the four sisters Romanoff" started nursing, spending hours with the wounded and almost invariably being present at operations.

Society at once began to criticise this procedure. It argued that it was not the duty of an Empress of Russia to become a nurse. It failed to remember that at this time the illustrated papers were full of pictures of various crowned heads who were doing precisely the same thing for which they condemned the Empress! But she wore her rue with a difference. What was praiseworthy in others constituted a sin in her case. Without being accused of bitterness, I think I may be allowed to say that it makes me sad when I realise the persistent animosity displayed towards the Empress by all classes, from the prince to the peasant . . . "the evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." In the case of the Empress, the good she undoubtedly did during her life was not only interred with her but it was never recognised during her life. Her innocent fault consisted (to quote the words of an English writer) in not being able to understand "that in the eyes of her subjects she must shine and be ornamental, but not useful in the trivial acceptance of the word." Perhaps the Empress erred in her conception of the mentality of the Russian peasant. As an im-

partial critic, I fear this was the case. When she wore the Red Cross, the sign of a universal Brotherhood of Pity, the average soldier only saw in the Red Cross an emblem of her lost dignity as Empress of Russia. He was shocked and embarrassed when she attended to his wounds and performed almost menial duties. His idea of an Empress was never as a woman, but only as an imposing and resplendent Sovereign.

The pro-German tendencies of the Empress were mentioned after our reverse at Brest, when the Emperor assumed command. Everyone was suspicious of her, and, when she spoke English at the hospitals to her daughters and her ladies-in-waiting, the soldiers declared she was speaking German, and this report once started was magnified exceedingly.

The actual dawn of Revolution occurred before the death of Rasputin, but during the war it was openly stated that the end of Tsardom was at hand. All our defeats were attributed to the pro-German influence of the Empress, who was spitefully alluded to as "The Colonel" in certain salons.

Protopopoff, the Minister of the Interior, was always reporting plots against the life of the Empress. One, it was said, had been disclosed in an intercepted letter from a Society woman to a friend in Moscow. The writer lamented that the murder of the Empress had not been a "fait accompli," and declared that, failing murder, the next best remedy was incarceration in a madhouse. Princess Vasilitchikoff sent a letter to the Empress, in the name of the women of Russia, telling her that all classes were against



her, and daring her to mix further in Russian affairs.

It has been said that the Empress was equally furious at the contents of the letter, and the fact that it was written on paper torn off a letter-pad ! But it was *not* the question of the breach of etiquette which writing to the Sovereign on a letter-pad implied, it was the horrible accusations, the virulent animosity of the missive which at first angered the Empress, and afterwards grieved her. She cried bitterly when she told me. "Of what am I accused ?" she said. "Gregory is dead. Surely people might leave me alone !"

Princess Vasilitchikoff's letter gave rise to much excitement ; her portrait was in all the newspapers, and public opinion was divided for and against her.

Another letter was sent to the Empress, this time anonymously, but it was equally reprehensible, and this letter and the preceding one caused the greatest indignation in the hospitals, as the officers who knew the Empress as she really was were very angry. Life in general was excessively difficult and painful, so much so that, when my husband arrived from Mourmansk, and asked Count Kapnist how things were going, the Count replied : " You'll soon see for yourself, and you'll be horrified. We have gone back to the days of Paul I. Ruin lies ahead of us."

The Empress saw a good many people at this time. Every Thursday there were musical evenings, where I met various friends—officers in the Artillery, the Emperor's A.D.C., Linavitch, Count Rabindar and his wife (who was a faulty likeness

of the Empress), the officers of the "Standart," Prince Dolgouroki (who was afterwards murdered), Madame Voeikoff, the wife of the Commandant du Palais, Colonel Grotten, and many others.

A Roumanian orchestra, under the direction of the famous Goulesko, played on these Thursdays, and the Empress derived great pleasure in listening to the really exquisite music. A huge fire was always burning in the salon; the Empress sat near it, and a little seat immediately behind her was arranged for my exclusive use. If I happened to arrive after the Empress was seated, she always indicated the vacant place with a gesture and a sweet smile.

One evening, about a fortnight before the Revolution, when I was sitting in my usual place, listening to the Roumanian orchestra, I noticed that the Empress seemed unusually sad. So I ventured to bend forward and whisper, anxiously, "Oh, Madame, why are you so sad to-night?" The Empress turned and looked at me. . . . "Why am I sad, Lili? . . . I can't really say, but the music depresses me. . . . I think my heart is broken."

The same evening, Anna childishly observed: "We all seem out of sorts. What fun it would be to have some champagne!" The Empress was angry at the suggestion. "No . . ." she said, "the Emperor hates wine, he can't bear women to drink wine—but what matter his likes or his dislikes, when people will have it that he's a drunkard himself?" The Empress was in very indifferent health; mental worry had increased her heart trouble, but she endeavoured never to

let her health interfere with her public duties. At an official reception following the departure of the Guards, the Empress told me that she hardly knew how to endure the strain. "Veronal is keeping me up. I'm literally saturated with it," she said.

When my husband came home on a few days' leave, the Emperor sent for him, and listened attentively to all that he had to say, questioning him very closely on certain subjects. We had never thought of or mentioned the subject of his preferment; he had now spent two strenuous years in the mine-fields, and the Emperor noticed how ill he looked.

"Dehn must have a rest," remarked His Majesty. "I shall give him a post near my person."

But this kindly thought never matured. My husband was sent for by the Minister of the Marine, and left for England at twenty-four hours' notice, in company with General Meller-Zakomelsky, taking with them decorations destined by the Emperor for certain English officers. The news of the Revolution was not known by them or in England when they arrived, so an elaborate official reception was given them. Almost immediately afterwards the news was public property and it was impossible to use the Emperor's decorations. I often wonder what became of them.

Before leaving for England, my husband asked me to join him there. I could not promise. I loved him very dearly, but I felt that my duty lay with the Empress.

"No, Charles," I said, "I cannot promise anything at present, but, if things become better, I'll come."



When he had gone, I felt utterly unhappy, but I did not regret any sacrifice I was called upon to make for the Imperial Family. I loved them all far too much.

At this time the Emperor had every intention of remaining with his family, but, one morning, after having received General Gourko in audience, he suddenly announced :

"I'm going to G.H.Q. to-morrow."

The Empress was surprised.

"Cannot you possibly stay with us?" she enquired.

"No," said the Emperor, "I must go."

Almost immediately after the Emperor's departure, the Tsarevitch fell ill with measles, and I used to spend every evening with the Empress, who was naturally much worried over her son's illness. In these days, our intimacy had increased so much that my time was mostly devoted to the Empress, and I saw few of my friends and relations. But my aunt, the Countess Kotzebue-Pilar, was a great Society leader, and I heard all that transpired in her salon. One evening before dinner my aunt (who was always furious at the rumours current about the Empress) 'phoned me to come to her house at once. I found her in an excessively agitated condition. . . .

"It's awful what people are saying, Lili," she cried. . . . "And I must tell you—you *must* warn the Empress."

In somewhat calmer tones my aunt continued : "Yesterday I was at the Kotzebues'. . . . Many officers were present, and it was openly asserted that His Majesty will never return from G.H.Q. What are you going to do? You are constantly

in the society of the Empress—you cannot allow her to remain in ignorance of these reports.”

“She will not believe them,” I said.

“Nevertheless,” said my aunt, “it is your duty to warn her.”

I returned to the Palace feeling very unhappy. I hardly knew what to do for the best. At last, after a struggle, I decided to tell the Empress. As I had anticipated, she made light of the story.

“It’s all nonsense, Lili, I can’t believe such a thing—it’s nothing but malicious gossip. However, as you seem so apprehensive, send for Grotten (the Commandant du Palais) and tell him.”

“Don’t pay any attention to such a canard,” cried Grotten angrily, when he heard my story. “It’s a lie which stamps itself as the worst kind of lie.”

“Well, General,” I retorted, now thoroughly vexed with myself for having apparently made a mountain out of a molehill, “if God ordains my aunt’s report to be a lie, so much the better.”

“Don’t be cross. . . . I’ll most certainly get in touch with G.H.Q.,” said Grotten reassuringly.

THREE DAYS AFTER CAME THE REVOLUTION.

And now the funeral knell of Russia began to sound, at first muffled, but always insistently. Disorders broke out in Petrograd. The strikes began on February 21st (Old Style), and crowds clamoured for bread, of which the supplies had suddenly stopped. No one could understand this, as Protopopoff’s last words to the Emperor were: “There is plenty of flour, I’ll pledge my word that we have enough flour to last us for a month,

and after that fresh supplies will be coming in." The bread shortage was in reality due to the action of the Duma—it was an organised arrangement!!

Each day matters grew worse. Fighting took place in the streets, drunkards indulged in indescribable orgies, the police were murdered much in the same manner as they have been in Ireland. It was bitterly cold—snow lay in deep drifts, and Petrograd was in the iron grip of a black frost.

Protopopoff, the Minister of the Interior, was always ultra-optimistic—I never liked or trusted him; he did not seem the man to handle any great crisis. He was appreciated by the Duma until his deplorable interview in Stockholm, when he discussed the war in a very indiscreet manner; but, when the Emperor appointed Protopopoff Minister of the Interior, he was universally hated, and everyone blamed the Emperor for appointing a man so singularly devoid of merit. Protopopoff promised everything, without considering whether his promises were possible. It was the same with his statements: he disliked telling unpleasant truths, so he took refuge in pleasant evasions. He was the man who continually told the Imperial Family that nothing could possibly happen. "Trust in me," said Protopopoff, striking an attitude. And, whenever someone meekly remarked that the working classes were undoubtedly restive, Protopopoff struck another attitude which implied, "Did I fancy I heard you say '*restive*'?" and, aloud, in pained but hearty tones: "What? Are you actually troubling yourself about a little unrest? We'll soon crush them—Labour cannot stand up against *Me*."

It may be asked: Why did the Imperial Family,



and especially the Empress, place so much reliance in M. Protopopoff's statements, as, since the Empress knew all that was written concerning her, she, at least, could have possessed no illusions? The answer is simple: The Empress knew that she was unpopular, but she never would believe that this unpopularity lay with the people—she attributed the scandals and calumnies to class-hatred, and to that craving for sensation without which a certain section of the Press would be unable to exist. When, made bold by my ever growing apprehensions, I ventured to tell the Empress that in these days the "people" were not paragons of fidelity, she bade me remember the afternoon, not long distant, when we drove out to a little "Lett" village near Peterhof. I *did* remember. The automobile had stopped near the church, and, the moment the Empress alighted, she was surrounded by a crowd of peasants, who knelt before her, and, with tears in their eyes, prayed aloud for her happiness. After this the Empress was offered bread and salt, and it was with great difficulty that a passage was cleared to her waiting automobile. This incident occurred two years before the Revolution. "And yet you tell me, Lili, that these people wish me ill!"

"Madame, many things have happened during the last two years."

"*Nothing* has happened, Lili, to touch the real heart of Russia."

I do not profess to have any knowledge of politics, and I never wished to meddle in them, so it is impossible for me to attempt to discuss the so-called political influence of the Empress. We hardly ever spoke of politics, but I can truth-

fully state that I never once heard her utter one sentiment that might be described as even faintly pro-German. Her letters written after her arrest, which are reproduced for the first time, ought to plead for her more strongly than any words of mine. When the Empress wrote to me, neither she nor I had any idea that part of her correspondence would be read by the English public. The letters might never have reached *me*: they were smuggled out of the Palace and sent from Tobolsk in circumstances of much difficulty and danger. But they breathe sincerity of purpose in every line: they were written when the shadow of death was falling on the Imperial Family. . . . There is no trace of the hysterical, intriguing woman in any of them. The letter which contains the passage relating to the fleet will perhaps serve to vindicate the memory of the Empress more than anything else, at least so far as her alleged pro-Germanism is affected. Even now, Justice, blind, but nevertheless all-seeing, has decreed that Germany should acknowledge having laid the mines which destroyed the "Hampshire": Germany, brought to book, would not have scrupled to lay the guilt to the charge of the Empress, especially since she cannot defend herself. But Germany has not availed herself of the universal detestation which surrounds the name of Alexandra Feodorovna: so she has, at least, been spared *one* degradation.





## Part II—The Revolution



## CHAPTER I

ON Saturday, February 25th, 1917, the Empress told me that she wished me to come to Tsarkoe Selo on the following Monday, and I was (let me confess it) still in bed when the telephone rang at 10 a.m. I suppose my delay in answering must have amused the Empress, for her first words were: "I believe you have only just got out of bed, Lili. Listen, I want you to come to Tsarkoe by the 10.45 train. It's a lovely morning. We'll go for a run in the car, so I'll meet you at the station. You can see the girls and Anna, and return to Petrograd at 4 p.m. I'm certain you won't catch the train, but anyhow I'll be at the station to meet it."

I dressed at express speed, and, snatching up my gloves, a few rings, and a bracelet, I ran into the street in search of a fiacre. I had quite forgotten that there was a strike, and no conveyances were available! At this moment I saw M. Sablin's carriage: I hailed him, and begged for a lift to the station. On the way I questioned him.

"What news, Monsieur . . . ?"

"There's nothing fresh," he replied, "but everything is quite all right, although I must admit it is very strange about the bread shortage."

The train for Tsarkoe was just moving out of the station when I arrived on the platform, but I



scrambled in, and found myself in the company of Madame Tanieff, Anna's mother, who was going to see her daughter, now ill, like the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana, with the measles. Madame Tanieff, like M. Sablin, knew nothing fresh; she was chiefly concerned about Anna's illness; but the first words of the Empress, who, true to her promise, was awaiting me, were:

"Well, how is it in Petrograd? I hear things are very serious."

We said that there was apparently nothing alarming, and the Empress told Madame Tanieff to get into the car with us, and she would take her to the Palace.

It was a glorious morning: I remembered the splendour of the day long afterwards; the sky was an Italian blue, and snow lay everywhere. We were not able to drive in the Park on account of the drifts! On the way back, we met Captain Hvostchinsky, one of the Garde Equipage. The Empress intimated her wish to speak to him, and the car stopped.

Captain Hvostchinsky smiled at the notion of danger. "There is no danger, Your Majesty," he said; so, reassured, the Empress and I returned to the Palace. I went at once to see the Grand Duchesses. They were certainly very ill, suffering from bad pains in the ears; but they were pleased to see me, and I sat between the two camp beds, talking to them. After lunch I went up again, and presently the Empress joined us.

She beckoned me into the next room: I could see that she was agitated. "Lili," she said, breathlessly, "it is *very* bad. I have just seen

Colonel Grotten, and General Resin, and they report that the Litovsky Regiment has mutinied, murdered the officers, and left barracks: the Volinsky Regiment has followed suit. I can't understand it. I'll never believe in the possibility of Revolution—why, only yesterday, everyone said it was impossible! The peasants love us . . . they adore Alexis! I'm sure that the trouble is confined to Petrograd alone. But I want you to go and see Anna . . . she may also have been told this, and you know how easily she is frightened!"

I found Anna ill, and light-headed, and, as I entered her bedroom, I thought what a contrast it presented to the cool, darkened room which I had just left. Olga and Tatiana were so patient, they lay so still, and were grateful for any attention. *This* sick room resembled a "lever du Roi" in the days of Louis XIV. Anna was surrounded by a crowd of "sisters" and three doctors were in attendance. Madame Tanieff was there, looking the picture of misery, and Anna's sister, who was almost hysterical, kept on exclaiming, "All is lost." They had expected General Tanieff to lunch, but he had not arrived . . . there was no news of him. What were they to do? General Tanieff entered in the midst of this confusion, breathless, and scarlet in the face. "Petrograd is in the hands of the mob," he exclaimed, "they are stopping all cars . . . they commandeered mine, and I've had to walk every step of the way."

At this intelligence, Allie Pistol Kors (she had married the Grand Duke Paul's stepson) burst into tears and begged me to ask the Empress

what she had better do. I promised to see the Empress at once, and, as the Grand Duchesses Anastasie and Marie had just come to fetch me, I returned to the private apartments with them.

The winter afternoon was fast drawing in, and I found the Empress alone in her boudoir. She could give me no message for Mme Pistolkors. "I don't *know* what to advise," she said, sadly. Then, turning to me, "What are *you* going to do, Lili? Titi is in Petrograd . . . had you not better return to him this evening?"

At the sight of the Empress, so tragically alone, so helpless in the midst of the signs and splendour of temporal power, I could hardly restrain my tears. Controlling myself with an effort, I tried to steady my voice:

"Permit me to remain with *you*, Madame," I entreated.

The Empress looked at me without speaking. Then she took me in her arms and held me close, and kissed me many times, saying as she did so:

"I *cannot* ask you to do this, Lili."

"But I must, Madame," I answered. . . .  
"Please, please let me stay. I can't go back to Petrograd and leave you here."

The Empress told me that she had tried to 'phone the Emperor, and that she had been unable to do so. "But I have wired him, asking him to return immediately. He'll be here on Wednesday morning."

After this conversation we went to see the Grand Duchesses, and the Empress lay down on



a couch in their bedroom. I sat beside her, and we conversed in low tones so as not to awaken the sleeping girls. The Empress was still unable to believe in the reports, and she expressed a wish to see the Grand Duke Paul. "How I wish he would come," she said. She then asked me to go over to Anna's apartments, and say that she felt too unwell to come herself.

Anna's room still looked like a "lever du Roi"; Allie had taken her departure, so Mme Tanieff told me, and had gone to the Palace of the Grand Duke Paul. I lost no time in delivering the Empress's message, and quickly returned to her. The evening wore on. . . . News came that Petrograd was in a state of upheaval, and that crowds of mutineers were everywhere. The Empress begged me to 'phone Linavitch, the A.D.C. to the Emperor, and ask him to tell us what was happening. Linavitch was in command of a company of Horse Artillery at Pavlosk, two miles from Tsarkoe Selo, so it was not difficult to "get" him. "Tell Her Majesty," he said, "that I am here with my company, and that all will be well."

I spent the evening with the Empress in the mauve boudoir, and she told me how glad she was to have me near her. "I know the Grand Duchesses want you to be somewhere close to their room, so I've decided that the red drawing-room will be the best place for you to sleep.\* Come with me. Anastasie is waiting for us," she said.

The red drawing-room was a fine room ;

\* The apartments at Tsarkoe Selo reserved for guests and the suite were situated over the third and fourth entrances to the Palace. The red drawing-room was in the private apartments.—L. D.

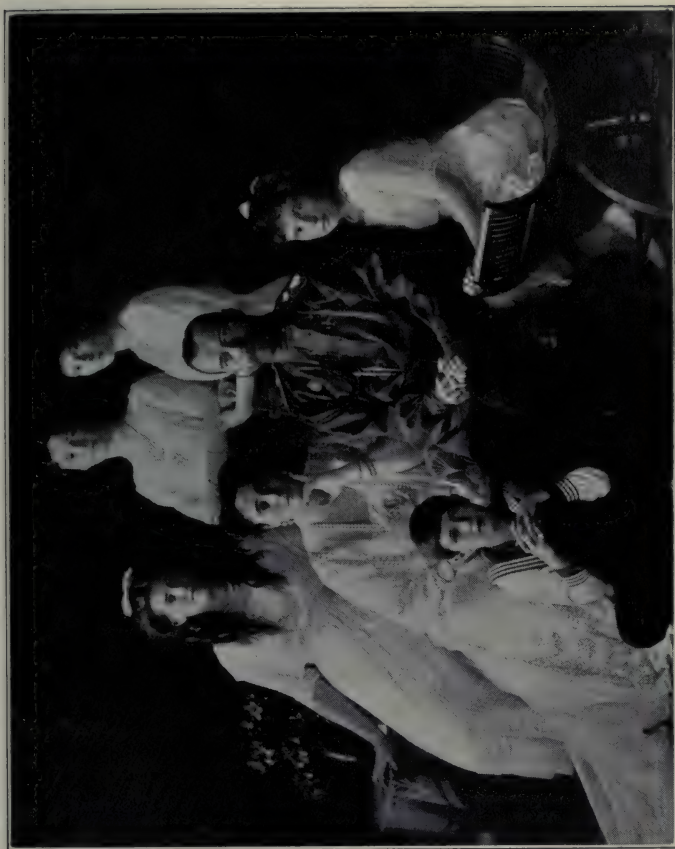
everything in it was upholstered in scarlet, and scarlet and white chintz covered the easy chairs. A bed had been arranged on one of the couches, and the two Grand Duchesses, with tender solicitude, had seen to the minor details themselves. Anastasie's nightgown lay outside the coverlet, Marie had put a lamp and an ikon on the table by the bed; and a snapshot of Titi, taken from their collection of photographs, had been hastily framed, and occupied a place next to the holy ikon. How dearly I loved them all . . . how glad I was that I was privileged to share their danger!

The Empress left me with Anastasie, as she wished to see Count Benckendorff, so Anastasie and I sat down comfortably on the red carpet, and amused ourselves with jig-saw puzzles until she returned.

The Empress came back from her interview with Count Benckendorff in a state of painful agitation, and, directly Anastasie had gone to bed, she told me that the reports were worse. "I don't want the girls to know anything until it is impossible to keep the truth from them . . ." she said, "but people are drinking to excess, and there is indiscriminate shooting in the streets. Oh, Lili, what a blessing that we have here the most devoted troops . . . there is the Garde Equipage . . . they are all our personal friends, and I place implicit faith in the tirailleurs of Tsarkoe."

I think that this thought comforted her: she seemed happier when she bade me good night.

I woke early on Tuesday morning. . . . Sleep



THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

BACK ROW  
left to right :  
Grand Duchesses Marie,  
Olga, and Tatiana

CENTRE  
left to right :  
H.I.M. The Tsaritsa,  
Tsar Nicholas II.  
Grand Duchess Anastasia

FRONT  
The Tsarevitch





had been almost impossible, but I had dropped into an uneasy slumber soon after dawn. I dressed at once, hoping to be ready for the Empress, but she was before me, and at half-past eight she entered the red drawing-room. We went at once to the Grand Duchesses, and drank our *café au lait* in their room. The Empress told me that she had wired repeatedly to the Tsar, but had received no reply. Later in the morning she received Count Benckendorff and Colonel Grotten, who informed her that matters were becoming more alarming and that the Garde Equipage had better remain inside the Palace, as there was a report that the mob, supported by the Duma, was even now marching on Tsarkoe.

The Empress immediately consented ; she was really delighted at the thought of having the Garde Equipage at the Palace, and the Grand Duchesses were frankly overjoyed. "It's just like being on the yacht again," they said. The Garde Equipage, which was now augmented by the Mixed Guard, and by sentinels taken from the Cossack Convoi, took up its quarters outside the Palace and in the vast souterrains. One part of the Palace was arranged as an ambulance station. We were very busy, but the Grand Duchesses made light of danger and showed none of our agitation. The Empress was always awaiting a reply to her telegrams. None came.

Tuesday was a day of general unrest. It seemed as if the weather were in sympathy with man's savage mood. The blue sky of Monday had vanished, an icy blizzard swept around the Palace, and a north wind drove the deep snow into still deeper drifts. In the afternoon, on my way

back from seeing Anna, I encountered Baroness Ysa Buxhoeven on one of the corridors. She was almost running and she seemed very much disturbed. "I must see the Empress," she said. "I've just come from Tsarkoe Selo (the town): everything is awful—they say there is mutiny and dissatisfaction amongst the troops." Ysa's terror was general: panic seized the dwellers in the Palace, but none of the servants left us. Mlle Schneider's maids, it is true, fled, but they came back again the next day.

The Empress was very anxious to see the Grand Duke Paul, but I believe that at first there was some misunderstanding, as the Grand Duke thought that etiquette demanded that the Empress should ask *him*, and he declared that he would not come unless she did. I had received a hint of this, so, when next I saw the Empress, I suggested that perhaps the Grand Duke was waiting for her invitation. . . . This had not occurred to the Empress; she told me to 'phone at once and ask the Grand Duke to come and see her after dinner.

I was placed, unwillingly, in a very awkward predicament. I had no official position at Court, but the Empress seemed to think that my duty was to act as her mouthpiece, and to assume an authority which I was far from desiring.

However, I 'phoned to the Palace of the Grand Duke, and, in the name of the Empress, I asked him to come to Tsarkoe Selo. His son answered the 'phone, and rather brusquely demanded to know who on all the earth was speaking.

"Lili Dehn," I said.

His "*Oh!*" was more eloquent than words!



During the afternoon the Empress called me into her boudoir. "Lili," she said, "they say that a hostile crowd of 300,000 persons is marching on the Palace. We shall not be, we *must* not be afraid. Everything is in the hands of God. To-morrow the Emperor is sure to come. . . . I *know* that, when he does, all will be well." She then asked me to 'phone to Petrograd, and get in touch with my aunt, Countess Pilar, and other friends. I 'phoned to several, but the news grew worse and worse. At last I 'phoned to my flat. The Emperor's A.D.C., Sablin, who lived in the same building, answered my ring. I begged him to take care of Titi, and, if it were possible, to join us at Tsarkoe, as the Imperial Family needed protection; but he replied that a ring of flames practically surrounded the building, which was well watched by hostile sailors. He managed, however, to bring Titi to the 'phone—and my heart ached when I heard my child's anxious voice:

"Mamma, when are you coming back?"

"Darling, I'll come very soon."

"Oh, *please* come; it's so dreadful here."

I felt torn between love and duty, but I had long since decided where my duty lay.

I told the Empress what Sablin had reported; she listened in silence, and then, by some tremendous effort of will, she regained her usual composure. Her strength strengthened me. We had, indeed, every need for courage. The poor "children" were lying desperately ill. . . . They looked almost like corpses. . . . Anna was in high fever, the Palace was terror-stricken, and outside brooded the dread spectre of Revolution!

All at once the Empress was seized with an idea to talk to the soldiers. I begged to accompany her, in case of any unforeseen treachery, but she refused. "Why, Lili," she said, reproachfully, "they're all friends!" Marie and Anastasie went with her, and I watched them from a window. It was quite dark, and the great courtyard was illuminated with what appeared to be exceptionally powerful electric lights. The distant sound of guns was audible . . . the night was bitterly cold. From where I stood, I could see the Empress, wrapped in furs, walking from one man to another, utterly fearless of her safety. She was the calm, dignified Tsaritsa—the typical consort of the Tsar of all the Russias. Here was no hysterical religious maniac, no abandoned heroine of the novel! The Empress moved in this tragic *mise en scène*, protected by her own goodness; but, when the light fell on her fair, pale face, I trembled. I knew her weak heart, her delicacy of physique—suppose she were to faint?

When the Empress came back, she was apparently possessed by some inward exaltation. She was radiant; her trust in the "people" was complete, she was sustained by that, often, alas, broken reed of friendship. "They are our friends," she kept on repeating, "they are so devoted to us." She was, alas, presently to discover that the name of Judas is often synonymous with that of a friend.

One thing troubled her fleeting happiness. "I haven't seen a company in the basement. . . . It is such a pity, but I didn't feel well enough. Perhaps I can manage it to-morrow."

After her visit to the soldiers, the Empress received Count and Countess Benckendorff, who asked to be permitted to remain at the Palace. Their request was gladly granted, and rooms were arranged for them.

The Grand Duke Paul arrived later in the evening. He was a tall, imposing man, who was considered to be very fascinating, and, what was more to his credit, excessively kind at heart. He had a long conversation with the Empress, and we could hear their agitated voices in the next room. The Empress told me afterwards that almost her first words had been:

“What of the Guards?”

And the Grand Duke had replied in tones of fatality:

“I can do nothing. Nearly all of them are at the Front.”

When we went to bid the Grand Duchesses good night, I was distressed to find that the firing was distinctly to be heard from their room. Olga and Tatiana did not appear to notice it, but, when their mother had gone, Olga asked me what the noise signified. “Darling, I don’t know—it’s nothing. The hard frost makes everything sound much more,” I said lightly.

“But are you *sure*, Lili?” persisted the Grand Duchess. “Even Mamma seems nervous, we’re so worried about her heart; she’s most certainly overtiring herself—*do* ask her to rest.”

The Empress decided that Marie should sleep with her. “You, Lili, will sleep in the room with Anastasie, and have Marie’s bed. Don’t take off your corsets . . . one doesn’t know what may happen. The Emperor arrives between 5 and 7



to-morrow morning, and we must be ready to meet him. Come to my room early, and then I'll tell you the train."

Neither the Grand Duchess nor I could sleep, and we lay awake in the darkness talking in low tones. Occasionally I was silent, but, when this was so, Anastasie never failed to ask: "Lili, are you asleep?"

During the night we got up and looked out of the windows. A huge gun had been placed in the courtyard. "How astonished Papa will be!" whispered Anastasie. We stood for a few minutes watching the weird scene. It was so bitterly cold that the sentinels were dancing round the gun in order to keep warm. Their figures were sharply defined against the arc-lights—it seemed like some new Carmagnole; in the distance we heard shouts of drunken voices and occasional shots—and so the night passed.

At 5 a.m. on Wednesday morning we went downstairs to the Empress's bedroom. She was awake, and as she opened the door she whispered: "Hush . . . Marie is asleep: the train is late. . . . Most probably the Emperor won't come until ten." The Empress was fully dressed, and she looked so sad that I could not help saying impulsively: "Oh, Madame, *why* is the train late?"

She smiled wanly, but did not reply. As we went back to our bedroom, Anastasie said in agitated tones: "Lili, the train is *never* late. Oh, if Papa would only come quickly. . . . I'm beginning to feel ill. What shall I do if I get ill? I can't be useful to Mamma. . . . Oh, Lili, say I'm not going to be ill."

I tried to calm her, and I persuaded her to lie down on her bed and sleep; but the poor child was actually sickening for the measles. Anastasie was the sweetest-natured girl: she adored her mother, and delighted in running hither and thither on her errands. The Empress always alluded to Anastasie as "my legs!"

When the Empress joined me in Olga's room a little before nine, she still hoped for the 10 o'clock train. "Perhaps the blizzard detains him," she said. She lay down on the couch, and I sat on the floor beside her; we spoke in undertones; but her chief anxiety was concerning my want of sleep.

"Sit on a chair, Lili, and put your feet up on the couch," she said.

"No—no—Madame," I replied, "it is not to be thought of." But, at her request, I compromised matters by resting the tips of my shoes on the end of the couch.

Ten o'clock came, but we still heard nothing. It was the first of March, a month fatal to the Romanoffs—well might they "beware the Ides of March!" The Emperor Paul was suffocated on the first of March, and, thirty-six years previously, on this date, the Emperor's grandfather, Alexander II, was killed by a bomb. The March of 1917 is destined to be associated with the downfall of the dynasty.

We were living in a state of continual and unrelieved anxiety. Dr. Botkin and Dr. Direvenko were in constant attendance on the three Grand Duchesses, but the Tsarevitch was, fortunately, much better. Poor Anastasie could not

reconcile herself to the idea of being ill : she cried and cried, and kept on repeating, " Please don't keep me in bed."

Service in the Palace was quite normal, but the water supply which worked the private lift used by the Empress had been cut off, and in consequence she was now obliged to walk upstairs. This sounds a trivial incident, but it entailed a great deal of suffering on the Empress, who was already overtired and overstrung. Her heart, always affected, now became much worse, owing to her having to go up and down stairs so often, but she insisted upon seeing her children, and she used to go up the staircase at times almost on the verge of fainting. I supported her—walking behind her and holding her underneath the arms.

We could not understand what had become of the Emperor : the Empress thought that the delay arose owing to the confusion on the railways, which were now in the hands of the Revolutionaries.

The dreary afternoon of March 1st was signalised by an unhappy occurrence. The Empress and I were standing at the window overlooking the courtyard, when we noticed that many of the soldiers had bound white handkerchiefs on their wrists. An enquiry as to the reason elicited the reply that the white handkerchiefs signified that upon the representation of a Member (who had come to Tsarkoe Selo) the troops had consented to act in unison with the Duma.

The Empress turned to me. " Well . . . so everything is in the hands of the Duma," she said, with a certain degree of bitterness. " Let us hope





Photo

*H.I.M. The Tsaritsa*

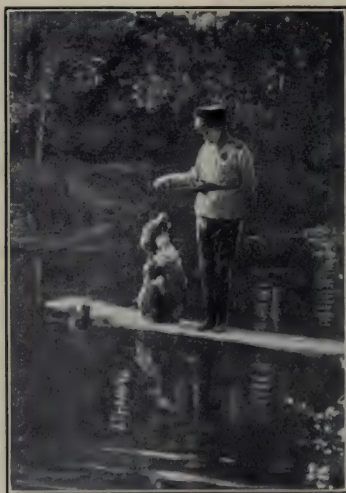
# SHOOTING PARTY IN FINLAND, AUTUMN, 1910

Centre—the Emperor : Right—Lieut.-Com. Dehn



THE TSAREVICH AT G.H.Q.

1916



THE TSAREVICH, AND HIS  
SPANIEL 'JOY.'



that it will bestir itself, and do something to remedy the disaffection."

She moved away from the window. I could see she was hurt and disappointed . . . but this was not destined to be the last of her many disillusionments !

Count Appraxon, Secretary to the Empress, arrived later in the day : he had experienced the greatest difficulty in reaching Tsarkoe—and his news was not reassuring. We sat up late that evening—dinner had been a mere farce—our minds were too anxious and too preoccupied to think of food. The children were dangerously ill, the whereabouts of the Emperor were unknown, and the Revolution was at our gates. When at last I bade the Empress good night, she told me not to undress. " I'm not going to do so," she said, and her quiet tones were significant that she anticipated the worst !



## CHAPTER II

EARLY on the morning of March 2nd the Empress came into the Grand Duchesses' bedroom. She was deathly pale—she seemed hardly alive. As I ran towards her I heard her agitated whisper : “ Lili—the troops have deserted ! ”

I found no words with which to answer. I was stupefied. At last I managed to stammer :

“ Why, Madame? In the name of God, why ? ”

“ Their Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke Cyril, has sent for them.” Then, unable to contain herself, the Empress said brokenly, “ My sailors—my *own* sailors—I can't believe it.”

But it was too true. The Garde Equipage had left the Palace at 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.—the “ faithful friends,” the “ devoted subjects,” were with us no longer. The officers of the Garde were received by the Empress in the mauve boudoir during the morning : I was present, and I heard from one of my husband's friends that the duty of taking the Garde to Petrograd had been carried out by a “ temporary gentleman,” Lieutenant Kouzmine. The officers were furious, especially their commandant, Miasocdoff-Ivanof, a big, burly sailor, whose kind eyes were full of tears. . . . One and all begged to be allowed to remain with the Empress, who, almost overcome by emotion, thanked them, saying : “ Yes—yes—I beg you to remain : this has been a terrible blow, what *will* the Emperor say when he hears about it ’ ”

She then sent for General Resin, the Commander of the Mixed Guard, and instructed him to make room for the loyal officers in his regiment.

General Resin told me long afterwards that he was relieved when he knew that the cowardly Garde had actually left the Palace, as orders had been given for a detachment to go on one of the church towers which commanded a view of the courtyard, and if, by a certain time, the troops had not joined the Duma, to train two enormous field-guns on to the Palace !

There was still no news of the Emperor, although the Empress constantly telegraphed. It was reported that his train was returning to G.H.Q., and at the time many people thought that if it reached there the troops would have followed the Emperor. We 'phoned to the hospitals for news, and the Empress received a good many people. To all these she was her usual calm, dignified self. When I marvelled at her fortitude, she replied : " Lili, I must *not* give way. I keep on saying, '*I must not*'—it helps me."

In the late afternoon, Rita Hitrowo (one of the younger ladies-in-waiting, and a friend of the Grand Duchesses) arrived from Petrograd with the worst possible tidings, and, after the Empress had spoken to Rita, she received two officers of the Mixed Guard, who proposed to try and get a letter from her through to the Emperor: it was arranged that they should leave Tsarkoe the next evening. The Empress was always willing to hope. But the night passed, and still never a word came from the Emperor.

On March 3rd I took my *café au lait* with Marie, and we were joined by the Empress. It

was a day of agony. The Grand Duchesses grew worse : their ears were badly inflamed, it seemed as if they might not recover. The Empress tried to snatch a little rest by occasionally lying on a couch : her feet had now become very painful, and her heart affection was, at times, alarming. Meals were silent and horrible affairs : I felt as though each morsel would choke me. But, as I had now grown desperate with anxiety, I conceived the notion of communicating with the Emperor by aeroplane. Might not his whereabouts be discovered in this way ? The Empress welcomed the idea, and she sent for General Resin, and asked for an aeroplane to be despatched at once. He agreed, but even the weather was against us. . . . A blizzard set in ; the dark sky was blotted out with scudding snow, and the wind howled dismally round the Palace.

The Grand Duke Paul arrived about 7 o'clock in the evening. The Empress was engaged in writing letters for the officers to convey to the Emperor, but she received the Grand Duke without a moment's delay.

The interview took place in the red drawing-room. Marie and I were in the adjoining study, and from time to time we heard the loud voice of the Grand Duke and the agitated replies of the Empress. Marie began to get apprehensive.

" Why is he shouting at Mamma ? " she asked. " Don't you think I had better see what's the matter, Lili ? "

" No, no," I said, " we had better remain here quietly."

" *You* can remain, but I'll go to my room,"



she answered. "I can't bear to think Mamma is worried."

Hardly had the Grand Duchess left the study when the door opened and the Empress appeared. Her face was distorted with agony, her eyes were full of tears. She tottered rather than walked, and I rushed forward and supported her until she reached the writing-table between the windows. She leant heavily against it, and, taking my hands in hers, she said brokenly :

"*Abdiqué !*"

I could not believe my ears. I waited for her next words. They were hardly audible. At last : "*Le pauvre . . . tout seul là bas . . . et passé . . . oh, mon Dieu, par quoi il a passé ! Et je ne puis pas être près de lui pour le consoler.*"

"*Madame, très chère Madame, il faut avoir du courage.*"

She paid no attention to me, and kept on repeating, "*Mon Dieu, que c'est pénible. . . . Tout seul là bas !*" I put my arms around her and we walked slowly up and down the long room. At last, fearing for her reason, I cried : "*Mais Madame—au nom de Dieu—il vit ! !*"

"Yes, Lili," she replied, as if new hope inspired her. "Yes, he lives."

"I entreat you, Madame, don't lose your courage, don't give way : think of your children and of the Emperor."

The Empress considered me with almost painful scrutiny.

"And you, Lili, what of you ?"

"Madame, I love you more than anything in this world."

"I know it—I see it, Lili."

"Well, Madame, *write* to him. Think how pleased he will be." I drew the Empress towards the writing-table, and she sank on a chair. . . .

"Write, dear Madame, write," I repeated.

She obeyed almost like a child, murmuring, "Yes, Lili . . . how glad he'll be."

Feeling that I might venture to leave the Empress for a few minutes, I went in search of Dr. Botkin, who gave me a composing draught for her. . . . But the Empress did not wish to take it, and it was only when I said: "For *his* sake, Madame," that she complied.

The sound of bitter weeping now attracted my attention. In one corner of the room crouched the Grand Duchess Marie. She was as pale as her mother. She *knew* all! At this moment Volkoff, that faithful servant, entered, and in trembling tones announced that dinner was served. The Empress rose and endeavoured to regain her composure. . . . I followed her into the next room. She looked round. "Where is Marie?" she said.

I went back to the red drawing-room. Marie was still crouching in the corner. She was so young, so helpless, so hurt, that I felt I must comfort her as one comforts a child. I knelt beside her, her head rested on my shoulder. I kissed her tear-stained face.

"Darling," I said, "don't cry. . . . You will make Mamma so unhappy. Think of *her*."

At the words, "Think of *her*," the Grand Duchess remembered the unswerving devotion of the children towards their parents. Every thing was always subservient to Mamma and Papa.

"Ah . . . I'd forgotten, Lili. Yes, I must

think of Mamma," she answered. Little by little her sobs ceased, her composure returned, and she went with me to her mother.

That night the Empress and I sat up very late : she had paid her usual visit to the Grand Duchesses, when she had tried outwardly to appear calm. But alone with me it was a different matter. The Empress told me that the Emperor had abdicated in favour of the Tsarevitch. "Now *he'll* be taken from me," she cried. "The people are to assume the Regency. What shall I do?" She started at every footfall ; she trembled at the mere sound of a voice. . . . One idea obsessed her—someone might come at any moment to take away her son !

"But, Madame, nothing can be done until the Emperor returns."

"No, surely they will not dare ; and *he'll* be with us very soon," she said. Then, with her usual unselfishness, the Empress insisted upon seeing Count Benckendorff. "I must console him and strengthen him. I can imagine his state of mind."

It was an affecting interview. . . . I do not know what actually transpired, but, when the Empress returned, she was crying. "*Le pauvre vieux*," she murmured, as if to herself.

I did not allow the Empress to see how apprehensive I was, how utterly despairing. I did not share her optimism. . . . The position was most precarious, and the desperate condition of the Grand Duchesses augmented the general unhappiness. Our only hope lay in the Emperor's return—at any rate, his presence would afford us some moral protection ! That night Marie and I



slept in the red drawing-room. We lay awake for hours talking about the new developments. But one thought consoled us. The Emperor was still alive!

When the Empress paid her usual visit to the Grand Duchesses, she told us that her first idea was to see all those in the Palace, and console them as much as possible. Countess Gendrinkoff, her devoted lady-in-waiting, who was away visiting a sick relative, returned to Tsarkoe directly she heard of the Emperor's abdication, and her meeting with the Empress was most touching. At first neither of them spoke; and then the Countess, usually a most self-contained individual, broke into bitter weeping.

It was a tragic morning. Towards noon the Empress sent for me. "Lili," she said, "the Duma is losing no time. M. Rodziansko\* has intimated that we must make our preparations for departure. He says we are to meet the Emperor somewhere *en route*. But we can't possibly go; how can we move the children? I've spoken to the doctors, and they say it would be fatal! I've told Rodziansko this, and he is returning later to acquaint me with the decision of the Duma."

Rodziansko and his colleagues returned at the time appointed. They were at once taken to the Empress.

"The decision of the Duma is unalterable," said Rodziansko curtly.

"But my children—my daughters . . ."  
pleaded the Empress.

\* M. Rodziansko, the President of the Duma, was an aristocrat who had turned Revolutionary: he was always antagonistic to the Imperial Family.

"When a house is on fire, it is best to leave it," answered Rodziansko, with a sardonic smile.

There was apparently nothing to be done. We were at the mercy of Tiberius, and we commenced our preparations for departure. The Empress asked me if I would like to accompany them. I begged to be permitted to do so. "*I cannot leave you, Madame,*" I said.

We endeavoured to 'phone to certain friends, but it was impossible. At last the operator, in frightened tones, whispered, "I can't give you the number; the telephone is not in our hands. I beg you, don't talk—I'll ring you up directly it is safe."

In the course of the afternoon a servant informed us that an officer of one of the Tartar regiments begged the Empress to receive him. The Empress asked me to interview him, as she felt too ill to do so, and accordingly I went over to the fourth wing of the Palace, where the officer was waiting. As I traversed the long corridors, I heard the sound of rough voices. I stopped, terrified, at the entrance of one of the salons—the Mixed Guards were just about to change the guard; but "changing the guard" was no longer the decorous proceeding of yester-year! When the fresh detachment entered the salon, they threw themselves literally into the arms of the other soldiers, shouting, "New-born citizens of freedom, we congratulate you."

I passed the "new-born citizens of freedom," and I found Lieutenant Markoff, to whom I explained the reason of my "deputising." The poor boy had been wounded, he could scarcely stand; but his spirit was unconquerable.

"Madame," he said, "I've fought my way through the mob in order to see the Empress, and assure her of my devotion. The assassins wanted to tear off my epaulettes with HER cypher. I told them that the Empress had given them to me, and that it was her right alone to deprive me of them. I've arrived here at last. . . . I entreat you to ask the Empress to allow me to remain somewhere near her. . . . I don't care if I wash up the dirty plates. I'll do anything—only let me stay!"

I promised Markoff to deliver his message, and on my way back I heard the soldiers laughing and singing. Sick at heart, and utterly disgusted at their behaviour, I reported it to the Empress. "*Les malheureux*," she said, "*ce n'est pas leur faute, c'est la faute à ceux qui les trompent.*" She granted poor young Markoff's request, and told me to see General Resin, and arrange for Markoff to be included in his detachment.

I suppose the first idea of most people in the position of the Empress, faced with hurried flight, would have been to save their jewels. But jewels were a secondary consideration with the Empress; her chief treasures were those of sentiment, and, as I watched her collecting her favourite books and photographs, I thought that in this instance, as in all others, she was more of the woman than the Empress. And the idea of leaving the scene of many of her happiest associations must have been heart-rending to her. She had transformed the Palace into a home; here she had watched the beautiful growth of her four fair daughters and her adored



son. And here she was destined to drink the uttermost dregs of the Cup of Sorrow.

Whilst she was gathering together her personal treasures, the Empress, recalled in imagination to Petrograd, by the sight of a photograph, asked me to telephone to Prince Ratief, the Commandant of the Winter Palace, and tell him that her thoughts were with them all. Fortunately I was enabled to do so; the Prince himself answered my call. "I thank Her Majesty from my heart. We are still alive, but crowds surround the Palace," he said.

After dinner, we went to see the Grand Duchesses, and then to the mauve boudoir—there was no news from the Emperor; all sorts of rumours were current, the most insistent being that he had returned to G.H.Q.

Sunday, the 5th of March, was for us another hopeless dawn. The Empress gave orders for a *Te Deum* to be sung, and the miraculous ikon from Znaminie\* brought to the Palace and taken to the sick-rooms. The procession bearing the ikon passed through the Palace; the Empress walked in it, and, as I looked at the lovely representation of the Virgin and Child, the expression of the eyes seemed the same which I had often seen in those of the Empress—a combination of Faith, Hope and Tragedy!

It was a strange sight to witness the solemn little procession as it traversed the almost deserted splendours of the Palace. Incense wafted wreaths of perfume towards Heaven, the solemn chant rose and fell, the gold and blues of the Virgin's draperies glowed when the ikon passed one of

\* Znaminie is a little church adjacent to the Palace.

the windows, the sacred symbol of the Cross raised its head above the tumult of Revolution. It seemed to me as if this were some last appeal to God, Who, we are told, is a God of Love and Pity.

The Empress was anxious that the ikon should be taken to Anna's room, so the procession wended its way thither. There, as usual, were the fuss and overcrowding which seemed inseparable from Anna's attack of measles; doctors, nurses and sisters took up all the available space, so, whilst the Empress was praying by the bedside, I stood by the door. One of the doctors from Anna's hospital was near, and, recognising me, he whispered: "I say, Madame Dehn, I think I shall say good-bye to the Palace. Things are getting too hot for *my* comfort." But, if he expected an answer, he received *none*. I simply stared at him.

The Empress was still kneeling by Anna's bed, and Anna, now thoroughly hysterical and *exaltée* by reason of much incense and many prayers, was crying and kissing the Empress's folded hands. It is quite impossible for English readers to imagine such a scene, but these religious processions in the case of illness were of common occurrence with us.

I went back to see Anna later in the evening, and, when I entered the bedroom, I was surprised to see the matron of Anna's hospital, who was praying—a taper in her hand. Directly she saw me, her prayers took unto themselves wings; we had always disliked each other, so our conversation was short and to the point.

"What, are *you* still here?" she exclaimed, meaningly.

"Yes . . . I'm *here*," I replied, with equal emphasis.

Anna said nothing ; she looked more childish than ever, and very ill at ease. The impression which I received was a bad one, and, when I related to the Empress what I had seen, she wrote to the doctor at the hospital, and asked him to send for the matron, as her presence was not required. Soon after this she resigned, and, like many others of her kind, she left Tsarkoe for an unknown destination.

On Monday, March 6th, all was in readiness for our departure. But one thing yet remained for us to do, and this was, in my eyes, of the utmost importance. During one of my restless nights, I suddenly remembered that the Empress had always kept a diary and that she possessed the diaries of her friend, Princess Orbelliany, which had been bequeathed to her by the Princess.

These contained most intimate accounts of various people, and events connected with the Court. I likewise remembered the Empress's sentimental habit of preserving correspondence with associations, and I dreaded the possibility of either letters or diaries falling into the hands of the Revolutionaries. I knew that the worst construction would be placed by the "Sons of Freedom" on anything unusual which these papers might contain. Even the Empress's habit of calling people by pet names might be construed as sensualism or treason !

I hardly dared suggest the wisdom of destroying this personal property, but my devotion triumphed over my nervousness. To my intense surprise, the Empress at once agreed to do as I proposed.



It may be argued that I was guilty of the worst Vandalism in persuading the Empress to destroy her diaries and correspondence. I may have been, in an historical and artistic sense—but I was right on the score of friendship. We had already experienced the misconstruction which had been put on *one* sentence in a letter: What might not be the fate of the contents of the Imperial diaries if they fell into the hands of censorious and “pure-minded” Revolutionaries?

Princess Orbelliany’s diaries were burned first. They consisted of nine leather-bound volumes, and we experienced much difficulty in destroying them. This *auto-da-fé* of sentiment took place in the red drawing-room, but we did not attempt to finish burning the diaries and correspondence in one day. It was at best a melancholy task, and we decided to spread it over a week—especially as the Grand Duchesses were very ill, and we had to be with them constantly. Olga was now suffering with inflammation in the head, and Anastasie made little or no progress.

After lunch, when the Empress and I were sitting in the mauve boudoir, we were startled by the sudden entrance of Volkoff. He was very agitated, his face was pale, he trembled in every limb. Without waiting to be addressed by the Empress, and utterly oblivious of etiquette, he cried: “The Emperor is on the ‘phone!’”

The Empress looked at Volkoff as if he had taken leave of his senses; then, as she realised the full import of his words, she jumped up with the alacrity of a girl of sixteen, and rushed out of the room.

I waited anxiously. I kept on praying that a

little happiness might yet be hers . . . perhaps, for all we knew, the danger had passed.

When the Empress returned, her face was like an April day—all smiles and tears!

“Lili,” she exclaimed, “imagine what were his first words . . . he said: ‘I thought that I might have come back to you, but they keep me here. However, I’ll be with you all very soon.’” The Emperor added that the Dowager Empress was coming from Kieff to be with him, and that he had only received the Empress’s wires *after* the abdication. “The poor one!” said the Empress. “How much he has suffered! how pleased he’ll be to see his mother!”

Thus the day which had begun so sadly ended happily . . . we went at once to tell the glad news to the Grand Duchesses and the Tsarevitch, who was much better, and greatly excited at the prospect of his father’s return. M. Gilliard, a charming Swiss, who taught the children French, was with him, but Mr. Gibbs, his English tutor, was in Petrograd. I always remember Mr. Gibbs and his kindness to me. On one occasion upon going to Petrograd he put himself to great inconvenience to get news of Titi, and procure clothes for myself. Notwithstanding innumerable difficulties, he returned with reassuring tidings of Titi, and a clean nurse’s uniform and lingerie for myself.\*

\* During this time the Empress and I wore nurses’ uniforms. It has been erroneously stated that the Empress wore ordinary dress. This is not the case.

### CHAPTER III

AFTER our usual visit to the children (March 7th) the Empress and I went into the red drawing-room, where a fierce fire was burning in the huge grate, and we recommenced our work of destruction.

A large oaken coffer had been placed on the table ; this coffer contained all the letters written to the Empress by the Emperor during her engagement and married life. I dared not look at her as she sat gazing at the letters which meant so much. I think she re-read some of them, for at intervals I heard stifled sobs, and those sighs which have their origin in the heart's bitterness. Many of the letters had been written before she was a wife and a mother. They were the love-letters of a man who had loved her wholly and devotedly, who still loved her with the affection of that bygone Springtime. Little dreamt either the lover or the beloved that these letters were afterwards destined to be wet with tears.

The Empress rose from her chair, and, still weeping, laid her love-letters one by one on the heart of the fire. The writing glowed for an instant, as if desirous of burning itself into her very soul, then it faded, and the paper became a little heap of white ash. . . . Alas for Youth ! Alas for Love !



When the Empress had destroyed her correspondence, she handed me her diaries to burn. Some of the earlier volumes were gay little books bound in white satin; others were bound in leather. She smiled bravely as I took them, and an immense disgust seized me when I thought that the country of my birth was responsible for her misery and the injustice meted out to her. "I can't bear Russia," I cried. "I hate it."

"Don't dare say such things, Lili," said the Empress. "You hurt me. . . . If you love me, don't ever say you hate Russia. The people are not to blame; they don't understand what they are doing."

A coloured post-card of South Russia fell out of one of the diaries. I picked it up. It was a pretty picture of young girls standing in a flower-starred meadow . . . and it brought Revovka back to me. "That's *home*," I murmured. But the Empress heard my words.

"What did you say? Repeat it, Lili. You said, 'That's *home*.' Now you must never say you hate Russia."

At this time, I am proud to say, the Empress relied on me as woman to woman. To her, I was always "Lili," or "My brave girl." I was her friend in trouble. The fact that I possessed no official position mattered nothing to her; every moment I was writing letters, taking messages, and seeing people on her behalf. I obeyed her absolutely, and her gentle influence gave me fresh strength to hope and to endure.

The burning of the diaries extended over Wednesday and Thursday . . . but on Thursday

one of the Empress's dressers came to the red drawing-room and begged us to discontinue. "Your Majesty," said she, "the sweepers are searching for the half-charred pieces of paper, some of which have been carried up the chimney. I beg of you to cease. . . . These men are talking among themselves. . . . They are utterly disloyal." But our task was completed—at any rate we had checkmated the curiosity of the Revolutionaries!

At 7 o'clock the Empress asked me to telephone again to the Winter Palace. As on the previous occasion, Prince Retief answered me.

"How are things with you?" I enquired.

"The mob is even now at the gates of the Palace," he replied with absolute unconcern. "I beg you, Madame, to present my assurances of fidelity and devotion to the Empress. . . . I may not be able to do so again. . . . Ah! . . . I thought as much. Madame, it distresses me to appear discourteous, but I fear I am about to be killed. . . . The doors of this room are being forced!" His voice ceased—there was a terrible crash. . . . I could bear no more, and the receiver slipped from my nerveless hands.

We remained in the mauve boudoir until quite late, but, just as we were about to go to bed, Volkoff entered in a state of painful agitation. He managed to tell us that M. Goutchkoff had arrived, and insisted upon seeing the Empress. It was then 11 o'clock.

"But, at this hour—it's impossible," said the Empress.

"Your Majesty, he *insists*," stammered Volkoff. The Empress turned to me—terror and

pathos in her eyes. "He has come to arrest me, Lili," she exclaimed. "Telephone to the Grand Duke Paul, and ask him to come at once." Regaining her composure, the Empress rearranged the Red Cross head-dress which she had taken off, and stood waiting in silence for the Grand Duke. Neither Marie nor myself dared speak. At length, after what seemed an interminable agony of suspense, the Grand Duke entered, and the Empress told him in a few words about her ominous summons. The next moment, loud voices in the corridor, and the banging of a door, announced Goutchkoff's arrival in the adjoining room.

Goutchkoff, the Minister of War during the Revolution, was an openly avowed personal enemy of the Emperor, whom he had never forgiven for not having accepted him at his own valuation as the uncrowned king of Moscow. He had compelled the Emperor to abdicate through revenge; spiteful curiosity now urged him to gloat over the sufferings of a defenceless woman! He was a hideous creature, who wore big spectacles with yellow glasses, which partially disguised the fact that he was unable to look anyone straight in the face.

Marie and I clung desperately to the Empress; we were certain that all was now finished. She kissed us both tenderly, and passed out with the Grand Duke Paul, an infinitely tragic figure, recalling to my mind a vision of Marie Antoinette, whose troubles possessed so many similarities with those of the Empress. Volkoff, that loyal servant, true to the traditions of Imperial regime, informed us that Goutchkoff had brought two A.D.C.'s with



him, and that one of these men had accosted him with the words : " Ha, ha ! Here we are. You didn't expect us to-night, eh ? But *we* are masters of the Palace *now* ! "

Marie and I sat side by side on the sofa, the young girl shook with fear, but her terror was not for herself—Marie, like all the children, thought only of her beloved mother.

In this crisis of their fortunes, the Imperial Family manifested no sorrow at the loss of their rank and prestige. The only anxiety shown by them was the fear of parting one from the other. Theirs might have been the words inscribed upon the wall of a certain old prison in Italy : " Better death than life without you." And, if the report of their death be true, they most mercifully never knew the pain of separation.

At last footsteps sounded in the corridor—the door of the boudoir opened—and, to our unspeakable relief, we saw the Empress !

Marie ran towards her mother, half crying, and half laughing, and the Empress quickly reassured us.

" I am not to be arrested this time," she said. " But, oh ! the humiliation of the interview ! Goutchkoff was impossible—I could *not* give him my hand. He told me that he merely wanted to see how I was supporting my trials, and whether or no I was frightened." Her pale cheeks were rose-flushed, her eyes sparkled—at this moment the Empress was terrible in her anger. But she soon regained her calm dignity, and we bade her good night, thankful that she was spared to us.

Wednesday, March 8th, is a day momentous

in the annals of new-born Russia, inasmuch as it witnessed the arrest of a woman and five sick children, and of those adherents who knew the meaning of the words Friendship and Duty.

In the morning Count Benckendorff came to inform us that the Emperor would arrive at Tsarkoe on the 9th, and that the Revolutionary authorities had decided to arrest everyone in the Palace by noon. The Count asked the Empress to give him a list of those of her suite who would be willing to remain, and the Empress at once addressed me: "Lili . . . do you understand what this order means? After it is enforced, nobody will be allowed to leave the Palace, all news from outside will be stopped. What do you wish to do? Think of Titi . . . Can you bear to be without tidings of him?"

I did not hesitate. "My greatest wish is to remain with you, Madame," I replied.

"I knew it!" exclaimed the Empress. "But . . . it will, I fear, be a terrible experience for you."

"Don't worry on my account, Madame," I answered. "We will share the danger together."

At noon, General Korniloff made his appearance at the Palace with the order for the arrest of the Imperial Family. The Empress received him wearing her Red Cross uniform, and she was genuinely pleased to see him, since she laboured under the mistaken idea that he was well disposed towards herself and the family. She was entirely mistaken, as Korniloff, thinking that the

Empress disliked him, never lost an opportunity of spreading the most malicious reports concerning her.

Korniloff told the Empress that the Palace troops were to be replaced with those of the Revolution ; there was no use for the Mixed Guard and the Cossack Convoi ; the Palace was now thronged with Revolutionaries, who were walking about everywhere. When the officers of the Mixed Guard bade farewell to the Empress, many of them broke down and sobbed. She afterwards told me that it was also for her a most painful moment. The officers asked the Empress for a handkerchief, as a souvenir of her and the Grand Duchesses. . . . This handkerchief they proposed to tear in pieces, and divide between them ; and later, to their great joy, we sent them some " initial " handkerchiefs.

It was a day of good-byes ; many officers came in from Petrograd to bid farewell to the Imperial Family ; the Tanieffs left, as the Empress had insisted upon them returning to the Palace of the Grand Duke Michael, where they might reasonably hope to be in safety.

At last the Empress decided to tell the Grand Duchesses about the abdication . . . she could not bear this painful task to devolve upon her husband. She therefore made her way to their apartments, and was with them alone for a long time. Anantasie seemed to sense what had happened . . . and after her mother had left them she looked at me, and said, very quietly, " Mamma has told us everything, Lili ; but, as Papa is coming, nothing else matters. However, you have known what was going on . . .



how could you keep it from us? Why, you're usually so nervous . . . how is it you are so calm?"

I kissed her, and said that I owed all my fortitude to her mother. She had set such an example of courage that it was impossible for me not to follow it.

When the Empress broke the news to the Tsarevitch, the following conversation took place:

"Shall I never go to G.H.Q. again with Papa?" asked the child.

"No, my darling—never again," replied his mother.

"Shan't I see my regiments and my soldiers?" he said anxiously.

"No . . . I fear not."

"Oh dear! And the yacht, and all my friends on board—shall we never go yachting any more?" He was almost on the verge of tears.

"No . . . we shall never see the 'Standart.' . . . It doesn't belong to us now."

The Empress and I took tea together, and she told me how glad she felt that the Garde Equipage had left their colours in the Palace. "I should be so sorry to think that the colours were in the possession of the Duma," she remarked. At that moment we heard the sound of voices, and a noise of singing and shouting. The Empress sprang off the couch on which she was lying, and rushed across to the window. "Oh, Madame, don't look, I implore you," I said, fearing the worst. But she did not hear me. Then I saw her grow pale, and she fell back half fainting on the couch. The sailors were leaving the Palace with the colours!

The Grand Duchess Marie was seized with measles late that evening. Like her sister, Anastasie, she dreaded being ill. "Oh, I did so want to be up when Papa comes," she kept on repeating, until high fever set in, and she lost consciousness . . . her last comprehensible words being, "Lili, can't you sleep with Mamma to-night?"

"Yes, darling," I told her. "I won't leave Mamma alone—I'll be somewhere near her, even if I have to sleep in the bath."

I went to the Empress. "Madame," I said, "will you permit me to remain near you to-night?"

"No, Lili, certainly not. If anything should happen, why should you be obliged to witness a tragedy?" she replied.

I returned to Olga and Tatiana, who, like Marie, were very anxious about their mother. "Lili, you *must* not leave Mamma alone. One of us has always slept with her\*—she's not strong. Promise, promise us that you won't leave her alone;" and, when the Empress came to pay her last visit to the sick-room, the Grand Duchesses reiterated their request.

The Empress at first demurred . . . but, when she realised how much the Grand Duchesses dreaded her being left alone, she consented. "Well, Lili," she said reluctantly, "you see that the children must have their own way. But I will not allow anyone to think I am frightened. Undress upstairs, and, when my maids have left me, slip down the private staircase, bring your

\* From the time that the Emperor left for the Front, one of the Grand Duchesses always slept with the Empress.

sheets and blankets, and you can make up a bed on the couch in my boudoir."

It was a bright moonlight night. Outside, the snow lay like a pall on the frost-bound Park. The cold was intense. The silence of the great Palace was occasionally broken by snatches of drunken songs and the coarse laughter of the soldiers. The intermittent firing of guns was audible. It was a night of beauty, defiled by the base passions of men.

I went quietly downstairs to the mauve boudoir. The Empress was waiting for me, and as she stood there I thought how girlish she looked. Her long hair fell in a heavy plait down her back, and she wore a loose silk dressing-gown over her night clothes. She was very pale, very ethereal, but unutterably pathetic.

As I stumbled into the boudoir with my draperies of sheets and blankets she smiled—a little affectionate, mocking smile, which deepened as she watched me trying to arrange my bed on the couch. She came forward, still smiling. "Oh, Lili . . . you Russian ladies don't know how to be useful. When I was a girl, my grandmother, Queen Victoria, showed me how to make a bed. I'll teach *you*." And she deftly arranged the bedding, saying, as she did so: "Take care not to lie on this broken spring. I always had an idea *something* was amiss with this couch."

The bed-making "à la mode de Windsor" was soon finished, and the Empress kissed me affectionately and bade me good night. "I'll leave my bedroom door open," she said; "then you won't feel lonely."

Sleep for me was impossible. I lay on the



mauve couch—*her* couch—unable to realise that this strange happening was a part of ordinary life. Surely I must be dreaming ; surely I should suddenly awake in my own bed at Petrograd, and find that the Revolution and its attendant horrors were only a nightmare ! But the sound of coughing in the Empress's bedroom told me that, alas ! it was no dream. . . . She was moving about, unable, like myself, to sleep. The light above the sacred ikon made a luminous pathway between the bedroom and the boudoir, and presently the Empress came back to me, carrying an eiderdown. "It's bitterly cold," she said. "I want you to be comfortable, Lili, so I've brought you another quilt." She tucked the quilt well round my shoulders, regardless of my protestations, and again bade me good night.

The mauve boudoir was flooded with moonlight, which fell directly on the portrait of the Empress's mother, and on the picture of the Annunciation. Both seemed alive. . . . The sad eyes of the dead woman watched the gradually unfolding tragedy of her daughter's life, whilst the radiant Virgin, overcome with divine condescension, welcomed the angel who hailed her as blessed among women.

Masses of lilac were arranged in front of the tall windows. It was customary for a fresh supply of lilac for the mauve boudoir to be sent daily to Tsarkoe Selo from the south of France ; but, owing to the troublous times, no flowers had reached the Palace for a couple of days. Just before dawn, the dying lilac seemed to expire in a last breath of perfume . . . the boudoir was suddenly redolent of the perfume of Spring

. . . tears filled my eyes. The poignant sweetness hurt me—winter was around us, and within our hearts. Should we ever know the joys of blue skies, and the glory of a world new-born?

All was silent, save for the footsteps of the "Red" sentry as he passed and repassed up and down the corridor. At first the Revolutionaries had celebrated their sojourn in a Palace by singing seditious and obscene songs, but little by little these had ceased . . . the soldiers slept. My mind reverted constantly to the sick girls and to their brother, who, happily, unlike them, did not share their apprehensions. What a contrast this night presented to the quiet, happy nights of long ago! I confess it was difficult to see the hand of God in this—to me—unnecessary suffering, and to accept all in the spirit of humility which the Empress manifested.

At seven o'clock the Empress told me I had better return to the red drawing-room, so I gathered my bedclothes together and slipped unperceived and unheard up the staircase.\*

\* The remaining members of the suite occupied apartments in the fourth wing of the Palace. The Empress, who was afraid of infection for others, only saw them occasionally. I was quite alone with her and the children.

## CHAPTER IV

ON the morning of Thursday, March 9th, the Empress came into the Grand Duchesses' bedroom; she was agitated and anxious, as she had been informed that the Emperor would arrive at the Palace between eleven and twelve. I went with her to see the Tsarevitch, and we sat by his bed talking to him. The little boy was very excited, and he kept on looking at his watch, and counting the seconds which must pass before his father's arrival.

Presently we heard the sound of an automobile, and Volkoff entered. The faithful servant had refused to accept the fact of the Emperor's abdication, and, in a manner worthy of Imperial traditions, he announced:

"His Majesty The Emperor!"

The Empress sprang from her chair, and ran out of the room. I, too, rose. The meeting between the reunited family must not, surely, be witnessed by any outsider! But the Tsarevitch seized my hand. "No, no, Lili, you're not to leave me," he insisted, so I sat down by him for five minutes, and eventually I managed to slip away and take refuge in Anna's room—where I remained until after lunch, when I was summoned to the Imperial presence.

Following my instructions, I went into the Grand Duchesses' room; the Empress was not



there. Suddenly I heard the sound of footsteps. I knew to whom they belonged—but they were no longer the footsteps of a confident and happy man. They sounded as if the person who was advancing was very, very tired.

I trembled from head to foot—I dared not at first raise my eyes. When I did so, I encountered the tragic, weary eyes of the Emperor.

He advanced to where I was standing, and took my hands in his, saying, very simply :

“Thank you, Lili, for all you have done for us . . . and I? . . . what have I done for you? Absolutely nothing! Why, I have not even kept Dehn near you.”

“Your Majesty,” I answered, now unable to speak without crying . . . “it is for me to thank you for the privilege of being allowed to remain with you.”

As we went into the red salon, and the light fell on the Emperor's face, I started. In the darkened bedroom I could not see clearly, but I now realised how greatly he had altered. The Emperor was deathly pale, his face was covered with innumerable wrinkles, his hair was quite grey at the temples, and blue shadows encircled his eyes. He looked like an old man; the Emperor smiled sadly when he saw my horrified expression, and he was about to speak, when the Empress joined us; he then tried to appear the light-hearted husband and father of the happy years; he sat with us and chatted on trivial matters, but I could see that he was inwardly ill at ease, and at last the effort was too much for him. “I think I'll go for a walk—walking always does me good,” he said.

We passed through the corridors to Anna's apartments, where the Emperor left us, and went downstairs. The Empress and I entered the bedroom, and stood by one of the windows which looked out over the Park. Anna was very excited ; she kept talking and crying, but we had eyes only for the Emperor, who by this time was outside the Palace. He walked briskly towards the Grande Allée, but suddenly a sentinel appeared from nowhere, so to speak, and intimated to the Emperor that he was not allowed to go in that direction. The Emperor made a nervous movement with his hand, but he obeyed, and retraced his steps ; but the same thing occurred—another sentinel barred his passage, and an officer told the Emperor that, as he was now to all intents and purposes a prisoner, his exercise must be of the prison-yard description ! . . . We watched the beloved figure turn the corner . . . his steps flagged, his head was bent, his whole aspect was significant of utter dejection ; his spirit seemed completely broken. I do not think that until this moment we had realised the crushing grip of the Revolution, nor what it signified. But it was brought home to us most forcibly when we saw the passage of the Lord of All the Russias, the Emperor whose domains extended over millions of miles, now restricted to a few yards in his own Park.

The Empress said nothing, but I felt her hand grasp mine ; it was, for her, an agonizing experience. After an interval, she spoke. . . . " We'll go back to the children, Lili ; at any rate we can be together there."

The Grand Duchesses were delighted to know

that their father had returned, and I think the knowledge of his safety acted on them like a tonic. Poor Marie, who had so longed to be the first to welcome the Emperor, was now delirious, with intervals of consciousness. When I entered her room, she recognised me. "Well, Lili, where have you been?" she exclaimed. "I've been waiting and waiting for you. Papa is really *here*, isn't he?" The next moment she was back in the fantastic and terrible kingdom of fever. "Crowds of people . . . dreadful people . . . they're coming to kill Mamma!! Why are they doing these things?" Alas, poor child, others have since asked the same question.

That day the Emperor and the Empress dined and spent the evening together. The Empress told me afterwards that the Emperor lost his self-control when he was alone with her in the mauve boudoir; he wept bitterly. It was excessively difficult for her to console him, and to assure him that the husband and father was of more value in her eyes than the Emperor whose throne she had shared.

. . . . .

I cannot say that the Revolutionaries treated us with excessive discourtesy, but some of their methods were reprehensible. For instance, when certain complications ensued with Marie, it became necessary to have another medical opinion. This request was at first refused, but afterwards the authorities agreed, on condition that an officer and two soldiers were present at the medical examination! Colonel Kotzebue, the first Revolu-



tionary commandant, had formerly been an officer in the Lancers, and, as he was a distant cousin of mine, I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him in this official capacity, and I asked him to come and talk to me in Anna's room, as I considered he owed our family some explanation of his conduct.

"I can't imagine why I was nominated for the post," said Kotzebue. "All I can tell you, Lili, is that I was awakened in the middle of the night, and told to report myself at Tsarkoe Selo. Will you assure Their Majesties that there is nothing I will not try and do for them. This is really the happiest moment of my life, since it enables me to be of service to them."

When the Empress sent for me on the morning of March 10th, I found her lying on the couch in her boudoir. The Emperor was with her; she motioned me to come and sit beside her, and the Emperor talked to us.\* He first described an incident which had impressed him most strongly that very morning.

"When I got up," he said, "I put on my dressing-gown and looked through the window which gives on the courtyard.† I noticed that the sentinel who was usually stationed there was now sitting on the steps—his rifle had slipped out of his hand—he was dozing! I called my valet, and showed him the unusual sight, and I couldn't help laughing—it was really absurd. At the sound of my laughter

\* In all my descriptions of the conversations between the Emperor, the Empress and myself, I have endeavoured to describe what took place, almost word for word. I have not attempted to elaborate any of the statements, and my record may therefore be considered accurate.—L. D.

† The sleeping apartments of the Emperor and the Empress were situated on the ground floor of the Palace.—L. D.

the soldier awoke, but he did not attempt to move—he scowled at us, and we withdrew. But what a conclusive proof of the general demoralisation! All must indeed be at an end for Russia, as without law, obedience and respect no empire can exist.”

The Empress then questioned the Emperor about certain doings at G.H.Q.

“Some occurrences were exceptionally painful,” replied the Emperor. “My mother drove with me through the town, which was profusely decorated with red flags and a profusion of bunting. My poor mother couldn’t bear to look at the flags . . . but the sight of them did not affect me; it seemed such a stupid and useless display! The behaviour of the crowd was in curious contrast to this exhibition of Revolutionary power, as they all knelt, as of yore, when our automobile passed.”

“I could not bear to say good-bye to Voeikoff, Niloff and Fredericks. They didn’t want to leave me. I had to insist at last. The Revolutionaries promised most faithfully not to harm them.”\*

“One thing especially touched me,” continued the Emperor. “When I got into the train, I noticed five or six schoolgirls who were standing on the platform trying to attract my attention. I went to the window, and, when they saw me, they began to cry, and made signs for me to write something for them. So I signed my name on a piece of paper, and sent it to the children. But they still lingered on the platform, and, as it was

\* These faithful adherents were arrested at the next station and sent to Petrograd, where they were incarcerated in the Fortress of Peter and Paul.—L. D.

bitterly cold, I tried to make them understand that they had better go home. However, when my train left, two hours later, they were still there. They blessed me, poor children," said the Emperor, greatly moved by the recollection. "I hope their pure blessing will bring us happiness."

The Emperor told us that he had received countless telegrams after the news of his abdication was generally known. Many were abusive, but others breathed the concentrated spirit of loyalty. Count Keller sent a telegram informing the Emperor that he declined to recognise the existence of the Revolution.\* The Count afterwards refused to sign the documents of allegiance, and he broke his sword and threw the pieces down.

"General Rousky was the first to broach the subject of my abdication," said the Emperor. "He boarded the train *en route*, and came into my saloon unannounced.

" 'Goutchkoff and Shoulguine are also coming to talk to you,' he informed me. These gentlemen made their appearance at the next station, and they were excessively impertinent. Rousky told them that he had already discussed matters with me. But I refused to be ignored. I struck the table with my fist. 'I'm going to speak, I *will* speak,' I cried.

" 'You must abdicate in favour of the Tsarevitch, and the people will nominate a Regent,' said Goutchkoff and Shoulguine.

" 'But,' I replied, 'are you sure—can you promise that my abdication will benefit Russia?'

\* Count Keller was killed at Kief later.



“ ‘Your Majesty, it is the only thing to save Russia at the present crisis,’ they replied.

“ ‘But I must think it over. . . . I’ll give you my answer in a couple of hours.’ ”

“The delegates consented. I knew,” continued the Emperor, looking with affection at his wife, “that their first idea was to separate Alexis from the Empress, so I spoke to Dr. Fedoroff, who was in the train, and I asked him whether he considered it advisable to allow the Tsarevitch to be taken from her.

“ ‘It will shorten the Tsarevitch’s life,’ said Fedoroff bluntly.

“When Goutchkoff and Shoulguine returned, I intimated plainly that I would not part with my son. ‘I am ready to abdicate,’ I said, ‘but not in favour of my son, only of my brother.’

“My decision appeared to trouble them: they asked me to think better of it, but I was firm. Afterwards I signed the Act of Abdication. The train was then sent back to G.H.Q.”

Such is the bare narrative of the abdication, related as nearly as possible in the Emperor’s own words. Baron Stackelberg, a cousin of my husband’s, who was travelling with the Emperor, afterwards told me that he and M. Voeikoff, the Commandant du Palais, met Rousky on the platform of the station where he joined the train. The two gentlemen were about to send some telegrams from the Emperor to Rodziansko, in which the Emperor replied to the former’s request to give Russia a constitutional government. In the opinion of the Emperor, the moment had not arrived.

“Whose telegrams are these?” said Rousky.

"His Majesty's," answered Baron Stackelberg coldly.

Rousky snatched the telegrams from Baron Stackelberg, and put them in his pocket, remarking as he did so, "Useless!" So Rodziansko never received the Emperor's telegrams, and Baron Stackelberg, who is now in Finland, can confirm the truth of the story. M. Voeikoff and the Baron looked at each other, neither spoke, but each read in the other's eyes the unspoken thought—to kill Rousky then and there, and so avenge the insult to the Emperor. But Rousky had disappeared—the moment for righteous murder had passed!

. . . . .

Life at first went on much as usual after the Emperor's return: he always insisted upon reading the daily papers, but the filth of the gutter press sickened and pained him. One evening I happened to come into the library where the Emperor was reading a newspaper: his expression showed that something had seriously displeased him. "Just look here, Lili," he said, showing me the portraits of the new Cabinet. "Look at these men. . . . Their faces are the real criminal type. And yet I was asked to approve of this Cabinet, and to agree to the Constitution," he added with a touch of bitterness.

My time was now fully occupied. The Grand Duchess Marie was seriously ill, and I relieved the Empress in nursing her. . . . I had taken upon myself the task, formerly performed by the Empress, of sponging poor Marie's body, and, when the child was conscious, she liked me to brush and comb her lovely hair, which became sadly tangled

as she tossed to and fro in her delirium. Marie was the first unmarried Grand Duchess to sleep on a "real" bed of her own, but, as she was so ill, we moved her from the narrow camp-bed to a more comfortable resting-place.

The Empress was a skilful nurse; she was especially expert in changing sheets and night-clothes in a few minutes without disturbing the patients. When I showed my surprise, she said quite simply: "I learnt to do useful things in England. . . . I've never forgotten what I owe to my English upbringing."

One day my cousin, Kotzebue, told me that an English gentleman, Mr. A. Stopford,\* a friend of the Grand Duchess Marie Paul, was desirous of being of use to the Empress. He had, it appeared, a cult for the Imperial Family, and, as he was about to return to England, he asked Kotzebue whether the Empress would not like to send some letters by him to her relations. I told the Empress at once. It seemed such a wonderful chance. . . . Her first cousin, King George V, and his devoted consort, would surely welcome news from the Imperial Family!

The Empress was deeply touched by Mr. Stopford's offer. "I'll think about it, Lili," she said. But the next day she told me that she had decided not to communicate with King George and the Queen. "I *can't* write. What can I say? I'm too hurt and wounded by my country's behaviour. . . . But even with this I can't speak against Russia. . . . Besides, the Emperor is more worried than ever; he is so fearful that

\* If Mr. A. Stopford (1a St. James's Square) ever reads these lines, he may be glad to know that the Empress greatly appreciated his kindness.—L. D.



his abdication, and the unrest, may spoil the Great Offensive. . . . No . . . we can't communicate with our cousins."

Both the Emperor and the Empress constantly referred to England. The first idea of the Duma had been to induce the Imperial Family to go to England, but certain powers there were antagonistic to the proposition, as it was considered likely to be unfavourably received by the Labour Party. But those who were fearful of sheltering a defenceless family, whose only crime consisted in being defenceless, need have had no apprehensions.

The Emperor and the Empress did not wish to leave Russia. "I'd rather go to the uttermost ends of Siberia," said the Emperor. Neither he nor the Empress could face the prospect of wandering about the Continent, and living at Swiss hotels as ex-Royalties, snapshotted and paragraphed by representatives of the picture papers, and interviewed by amazing American journalists. Their retiring spirits shrank from cheap publicity; they considered that it was the duty of every Russian to stand by Russia, and face the common danger together.

Apart from their personal disinclination to go to England, the Soviets were opposed to the suggestion, and it was stated that, if any train left Tsarkoe with the Imperial fugitives, it would be stopped, and everyone murdered, as the Emperor knew too much to be allowed to leave Russia.

The Emperor brought me the newspaper which contained this statement. He was in a terrible rage. . . . He could scarcely contain himself, and he almost threw the paper at me.

"Read this, Lili," he exclaimed, his face white

with passion. "*Beasts!* How dare they say such things. . . . They judge others by themselves."

"Oh, Your Majesty," I answered, greatly troubled, "please don't read these horrible papers."

"I must, I must, Lili. I feel that I must know all," said the Emperor.

Occasionally he was in better spirits, and more like his old cheerful self. The Emperor was generally able to see the humour of any situation, and he would sometimes laugh at the idea of being, what he called, "an Ex." Everything was then "Ex." "Don't call me an Empress any more—I'm only an Ex," laughed the Empress; and one day, when some especially unpalatable ham was served at lunch, the Emperor remarked, "Well, this may have once been ham, but now it's nothing but an 'ex-ham.'" He was always amused by the likeness between him and his cousin, King George. One day he showed me a photograph of the latter, saying, "Have you seen my last photograph, Lili? Doesn't it flatter me?"

He had a great admiration for his cousin, and the Empress often spoke of Queen Alexandra, . . . her beauty, her sympathetic nature, and her boundless charity. "I would so much like to see my married sister in England," she invariably added, whenever she discussed her family. "Darmstadt is only a little spot in the garden of my memories," she would say, "but my mother died there, so I can't really be blamed for liking Darmstadt. . . . Isn't 'Home sweet Home' typically English?"

"None of my daughters shall marry German

Princes," she said on one occasion. It was suggested that Anastasie's future home might be in England, and the Empress welcomed the idea. . . . An English marriage would have been very near her heart. But "*l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose.*" If Russia had not betrayed herself, or if she had remained as solidly united as France, nothing would ever have been heard of the pro-Germanism attributed to the Empress. She was essentially English—English in her dress, her personal habits, her absolutely Victorian outlook; some of her ideas respecting a *ménage* were akin to those of the *Hausfrau*, but even these were English, as domesticity has always been a British attribute.

The Empress showed no special marks of favour to Germans who had settled in Russia. The reports of her having done so are untrue, or greatly exaggerated. There is no doubt that German agents were very active in Russia, and that the octopus of espionage put forth its tentacles in every direction. But in justice to a much defamed woman, surely it is unfair to credit her with being the instigator of this. Every European country was riddled with Germans, England more so than any other, and, although it was more intimately connected with Germany by marriage and consanguinity, no stones were ever hurled at the various personages, Royal and otherwise, who were really not as English as was the Empress. I remember, in connection with her impartial outlook, that, in 1910, a wealthy German named Faltsfein, was obsessed with the idea of becoming a Russian nobleman. A friend of his, an officer named Masloff, asked the Empress



to make it possible for Herr Faltsfein to change his skin, but she was very disgusted, and told Masloff that nothing would induce her to put such a proposal before the Emperor !

One awful day a lorry full of soldiers, in charge of an excessively ill-favoured officer, arrived at the Palace. Kotzebue interviewed him.

"I've come to fetch the Emperor," said the officer, with an unprintable oath. "He's going to be imprisoned in 'Peter and Paul.'"

"You cannot remove the Emperor," answered Kotzebue. "I am commandant here. I refuse to give up the Emperor at your orders."

"Ah . . . ah . . . I knew it," shouted the officer. "The Emperor has fled ! . . . we were told so in Petrograd. Let's search the Palace."

Kotzebue almost came to blows with the man. "I tell you the Emperor is *here* . . . I'll prove it." He then sent for Count Benckendorff and told him to ask the Emperor to pass through the corridor whilst the soldiers were looking. In a few moments the Emperor came slowly down the corridor . . . the officer rushed threateningly towards him, but Kotzebue restrained him, saying, "Well, you —, now you've seen the Emperor. Go back to the Soviet, tell them he's still here, and don't come again on a fool's errand."

The Emperor now walked in the Park every day, and each time he returned greatly depressed at some fresh mark of disrespect. "But," he said, "it's very foolish to think that this behaviour can affect my soul—how petty of them to seek to humiliate me by calling me 'Colonel' . . . after all, it's a very worthy appellation."

The Empress was a tragic figure, and, in her invariable Red Cross uniform, she symbolised Pity, in a world which knew not the meaning of the word. Every hour that I knew her, I loved her more.

One day, Kotzebue told me that Titi was ill ; in fact, *very* ill, but I did not like to agitate the Empress until Kotzebue came to ask her to permit me to go with him and telephone from the basement of the Palace. She was greatly distressed to hear that her godson was ill, and equally concerned at not having been told before. " My poor girl, what you must have suffered ! " she said.

Kotzebue and I descended into the basement : two soldiers guarded the telephone, and I was informed that I could only be allowed five minutes' conversation.

" How is the child ? " was my first question.

" Very ill, Madame," answered my maid.

" Please, please bring him to the 'phone.' I waited impatiently, and then a little feeble voice whispered : "*Maman . . . c'est vraiment toi ! quand viendras-tu ?*"

At that moment a soldier interposed.

" Your five minutes is up ! "

I returned to the Empress, almost heart-broken, but I endeavoured to appear cheerful. The interminable day wore away, evening fell, and I assisted at what had now become a sort of nightly routine. Every evening the Emperor wheeled the Empress in her invalid-chair across the Palace in order to visit the suite. It was a melancholy pilgrimage. She first stopped to talk with the Benckendorffs, and afterwards passed from group to group of her faithful adherents,

taking Anna's room on the way back—Anna, so to speak, representing the last word in dejection, as she was ever full of terrors and presentiments.

That night I was glad to seek refuge in the red drawing-room and find myself alone, and able to indulge in what is described as "a good cry." As I left the mauve boudoir, the Emperor and the Empress kissed me, and made the Sign of the Cross. I felt instinctively that they loved me, and were sorry for me.

A bright fire was burning in the red drawing-room, but I did not undress—I sat in front of the fire thinking of Titi. Yet even the knowledge that my son was seriously ill did not suffice to make me feel that my place was not here. I knew in my soul that the Empress came first, and would always be first where my duty was in question. I was well aware that I might never see my husband or my child again . . . but I knew that I should follow the Imperial Family wherever Destiny might beckon me. I confess I had my moments of weakness, when I longed for the security of home, and the peaceful existence which had hitherto been mine. To-night I felt more than usually despondent. The fire burnt low, and I sought to read the future in the red embers, just as I had done at Revovka in the long ago. Suddenly I heard the door of the salon open very softly, and a line of light pierced the darkness . . . someone was coming in!

I turned quickly to face the person who dared intrude upon the privacy of the apartments occupied by the Imperial Family. . . . Was it some fresh assumption of power on the part of the Revolutionaries?



But my visitor was no emissary of the Revolution—the slender figure standing in the doorway was that of the Empress. She looked more than usually fragile . . . she breathed with difficulty, her face was pale with fatigue, and, when I remembered the arduous ascent of the stairs, I was terrified lest a heart attack would ensue.

“Madame, Madame,” I cried, “is anything amiss? Are you in danger?”

“Hush, Lili,” said the Empress. “The Emperor and I are quite safe. But I couldn’t rest without coming to see you. I know all about Titi, I quite realise what you feel.” She took me in her arms just as a tender mother might have done, and she soothed me and caressed me. “My poor, dear child,” she said. “Only God can help you. Trust in Him as I do, Lili.”

We mingled our tears, and she stayed with me for some considerable time. It was a strange scene, but I wish that those who revile the memory of the Empress could have seen her then, and experienced the pity, love and understanding which were so essentially her prerogatives. She strengthened and consoled me as no other could have done, and her last words of comfort before she left me were: “Perhaps they’ll let us bring Titi from Petrograd to the Red Cross Hospital opposite the Palace, then you could always see him through one of the windows.”

## CHAPTER V

THE Tsarevitch was now almost well, and running about the Palace much as usual. I do not think he noticed many changes, the Revolution conveyed nothing to him except when he missed certain of his soldiers and his friends. He was still a happy, light-hearted child.

The Imperial Family had no presentiment of disaster for themselves, but they suffered untold agonies of mind over the fate of Russia. "Can you imagine what it means to the Emperor to know that he is cut off from active life?" said the Empress.

Soon after the episode of telephoning from the basement, Kotzebue went to Petrograd. I was anxious for his return, as he had promised to go and see Titi, and bring me the latest news from home. Days passed . . . I became apprehensive, and made enquiries, only to be told that we should not see him again at Tsarkoe! I saw in this an omen of coming trouble, so I went at once to the Emperor and acquainted him with what I had heard. The Emperor and the Empress were watching some of the ladies-in-waiting who were walking in the Park, followed by sentinels; the Empress noticed my agitation.

"Why, Lili, whatever is the matter?" she enquired.

"Madame . . . I hear that Kotzebue is to be repiaced."

The Emperor looked at me. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he remarked : " Well—it can't be helped " and straightway changed the conversation . . . possibly to calm our fears, or more probably to show how unaffected he was by the mandates of the Revolutionaries.

The long, monotonous days passed—we endured them alternately with the calmness of despair and with gratitude for their dullness. Once we witnessed a sight of horror. Hearing a sound of military music, and the tramp, tramp of many people, we went to the windows, and saw a funeral procession wending its way across the snow-covered Park. But this was no ordinary funeral ; the dead were some of the soldiers who had been killed at Tsarkoe Selo on the first day of the Revolution. It was a red burial—the coffins were covered in scarlet, the mourners were dressed in scarlet, and scarlet flags waved everywhere. Seen in the distance the procession looked like a river of blood flowing slowly through the Park. Everything was red and white, and the superstitious might have inferred from this a presage of the innocent blood so soon to be outpoured . . . since the snow was not whiter than the souls of the young and beautiful who are now safe in the keeping of a God of Justice, who most surely will repay !

None of us could forget the impression produced by this funeral ; blood seemed everywhere, and terror lurked in the shadows. The soldiers were buried in the Park, within sight of the Palace—another refinement of torture for those whose imaginations were already overexcited. Our nerves were frayed, although I do not think that



we were guilty of giving way to our emotions. But it was difficult to maintain our composure when insolent officers treated us in a shameful manner, or a soldier called the Empress by some filthy epithet. One soldier, however, was a Bayard. He possessed an English name, and his father taught in a school at Riga. This man was really extraordinary. He was not only polite, but he invariably tried to show us that he did not share the Revolutionary outlook. The two regiments which were at the Palace distinguished themselves by a series of petty thefts ; not even the spoons were safe. I suppose they would have described these articles as " Souvenir spoons " !

. . . . .

We were no longer to complain of monotony. Even then, events unknown to us were moving quickly, and in my case definitely.

The Grand Duchess Marie was still very ill, and Anna, who knew this, decided to go and see her. The Empress was against the idea ; Anna was ill, she said, and it was better for her health and her safety to keep as quiet as possible, and not to draw any undue attention to her presence in the Palace. So strongly did the Empress disapprove, that she was taken in her wheeled chair to see Anna, but she returned more nervous and apprehensive than before.

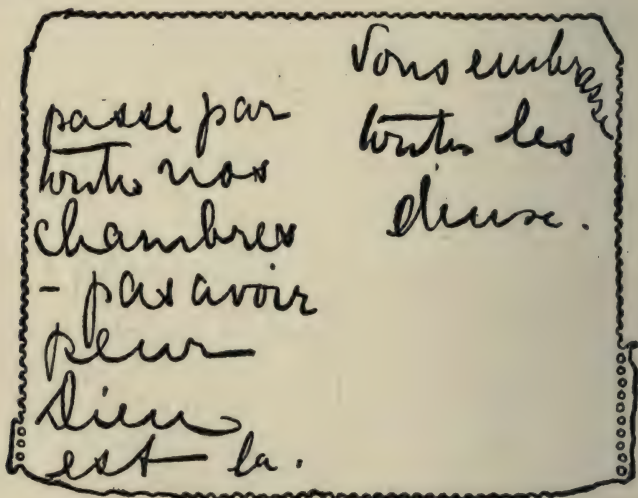
I spent the morning with the Empress, and I lunched with Anna, in the apparently forlorn hope of dissuading her from attempting to see Marie. After luncheon we discussed the burning question of Kotzebue's disappearance. Suddenly we were startled by hearing a noise in the corridor.

. . . Anna instantly rang the bell. A servant answered it.

"Who is outside?" demanded Anna.

"I don't know," replied the man, who was evidently much disturbed; "the soldiers are here." At this moment a *skorohod*\* entered, and handed me a tiny folded note. I opened it. . . . Written in pencil, in the Empress's handwriting, were these ominous words:

"*Kerensky passe par toutes nos chambres, pas avoir peur—Dieu est là. Vous embrasse toutes les deux.*"†



Heavy footsteps sounded in the corridor. I had barely time to slip the precious note inside my bodice when the door was flung open, and a man, followed by two others, came in. I stood up at once and looked at our visitor—it was Kerensky himself!

\* The *skorohod* were the confidential messengers of the Imperial Family. They wore a distinctive livery and wonderful hats adorned with black and yellow ostrich feathers.

† The actual note is reproduced in these pages. Translation: "Kerensky is passing through all our rooms—Do not be afraid—God is present. I kiss you both."

I saw a slight man with a pale face, thin lips, shifty eyes, seen under lowered lids, and a nondescript nose. Kerensky gave one the impression of being *mal soigné*. . . . He was not tall, but slight in figure, and his head drooped in a curious manner: he wore the blue jacket of an ordinary workman.

Kerensky slowly considered us.

"Are you Madame Anna Virouboff?" he said, addressing Anna.

"Yes," replied Anna, faintly.

"Well, put on your clothes immediately and be ready to follow me."

Anna made no answer.

"Why the devil are you in bed?" he demanded, staring at Anna's invalid *déshabillée*.

"Because I'm ill," whimpered Anna, looking more childish than ever.

"Well" . . . said Kerensky, turning to an officer, "perhaps we had better not move her. I'll have a chat with the doctors. In the meantime, isolate Madame Virouboff. Place sentinels before the door—she's to hold no communication with anyone. Nobody is to come into this bedroom or to leave it until I give the order."

He went out of the room, followed by the officers. Anna and I looked at each other, speechless with dismay. My first collected thought was for the Empress. I would not be separated from her.

"I *must* try and see Their Majesties," I said wildly.

"Yes, Lili, do. For God's sake see them," sobbed Anna.

I opened the bedroom door very softly: the



sentinels had not yet arrived. I caught a glimpse of Kerensky entering the room occupied by the doctors ; then, impelled by some desperate courage, I ran down the corridors, and arrived breathless in the Grand Duchesses' apartments. I found the Empress with Olga. I told her, in a few words, what had happened. Then distant footsteps warned us of Kerensky's approach.

"Run . . . Lili—hide in Marie's room—it's dark *there*," whispered the Empress.

I had barely time to crouch down behind a screen in Marie's room when Kerensky came in. He took no notice of the sick girl, but went in search of the Empress, who, with the Emperor, had now gone into the schoolroom. From where I was hiding I could hear Kerensky shouting. In a few moments the Empress entered ; she was trembling visibly. . . . The Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana (now convalescent) rushed forward.

"Mamma, Mamma, what is the matter ?"

"Kerensky has insisted upon my leaving him alone with the Emperor," answered the Empress. . . . "They'll most probably arrest me."

The two girls clung to their mother, and slowly made their way back to Marie. I had now emerged from behind the screen, and I went into the schoolroom, where I determined to remain until I saw the Emperor.

After what seemed a very long time the Emperor came out—alone.

"Your Majesty," I cried, "tell me, I implore you, if there is anything dreadful in store for Her Majesty ?"

The Emperor was painfully nervous. "No,

no, Lili, and if Kerensky had uttered one word against Her Majesty, you would have heard me strike the table—thus—” and he struck the writing-table with his fist. “ But I hear they’ve arrested Anna. Poor unfortunate woman, what will become of *her* ? ”

At the sound of her husband’s voice the Empress came out of Marie’s bedroom. The Emperor told her that Kerensky had arrested Anna because he suspected that she was implicated in political plots. “ If it’s true, it’s an awful thing,” said Kerensky ; “ but I suppose everything will now be disclosed.”

Their Majesties then related the particulars of their interview with Kerensky.

“ His first words,” said the Empress, “ were, ‘ I am Kerensky. You probably know my name.’ ”

“ We made no answer.

“ ‘ But you must have heard of me ? ’ he persisted.

“ Still no reply.

“ ‘ Well,’ said Kerensky, ‘ I’m sure I don’t know why we are standing. Let’s sit down—it’s far more comfortable ! ’ ”

“ He seated himself,” continued the Empress. “ The Emperor and I slowly followed his example, and, finding that I still declined to speak, Kerensky insisted upon being left alone with the Emperor.”

Shortly afterwards, to our great relief, we were informed that Kerensky had left the Palace and gone to the Town Hall. The new commandant, Colonel Korovichenko, was then presented to the Empress, who begged him to allow her to say good-bye to Anna. Korovichenko consented, and the Empress went, unaccompanied, to Anna’s

room. She sat very silent when she returned : she felt the parting keenly, as both the friends knew that, in all probability, it might be for ever !

The Emperor, the Grand Duchesses and myself now took up our position in "Orchie's room,"\* from which the windows commanded a view of the entrance to Anna's apartments. I was sitting by the Empress near the window. . . . All at once she took my hand, and said in a voice choked with emotion :

"At least, God will allow you to remain, and . . ."

Her sentence remained unfinished. . . . At this moment someone knocked at the door ; it was Count Benckendorff, who had hurried along to tell the Empress that he still hoped better things for Anna.

This was only a temporary respite. A little later we heard the sound of an automobile in the courtyard. I looked down, and saw two automobiles drawn up in front of the Imperial entrance to the Palace. Another knock ! This time it was a servant who announced :

"The new Commandant wishes to speak to Madame Dehn."

I went out ; Korovitchenko, a fair-haired, common-looking man with a hard mouth, was standing at the end of the corridor.

"Madame Dehn ?" he enquired brusquely.

"Yes . . . I am Madame Dehn."

"Well . . . get ready. Take as little as possible with you ; you are going with Kerensky to Petrograd."

\* Orchie was a pet name for Miss Orchard, the Empress's old governess, who had died at the Palace. Her room had been left undisturbed since her death.



I nearly fainted, but I managed to run back to "Orchie's room." In a few hurried words I acquainted the Empress with Korovitchenko's orders. . . . I could not look at any of them. I tried to be calm, but at the sound of Tatiana's uncontrollable sobbing I broke down and wept in the arms of the Empress.

"*Eh bien . . .*" she said, releasing me gently from her embrace, "*il n'y rien à faire.*"

"Is Madame Dehn ready?" shouted someone outside.

The Empress called Zanoty (one of her dressers) and told her to put some things together in a suit-case. She did not speak to me—or I to her—our hearts were too full. It was like some terrible nightmare. At length I managed to go into Anastasie's room. . . . She was in bed. I kissed her many times, and told her that I would never forsake them. Poor Marie lay asleep in her darkened room. . . . I kissed her flushed cheek, blessed her, and went out quietly. There was no time to say good-bye to the Tsarevitch.

. . . . .

Zanoty had packed my suit-case, and the Empress now sent her to fetch a sacred medal, which she hung round my neck, blessing me as she did so. At the last moment Tatiana ran out of the room, and returned with a little leather case containing portraits of the Emperor and the Empress, which had stood on her especial table ever since she was a tiny child. "Lili . . ." she cried, "if Kerensky is going to take you away from us, you shall at least have Papa and Mamma to console you."

Another imperative summons told us that the moment of parting was at hand. I put on my hat, and we left "Orchie's room"; the Emperor and the Empress walked on either side of me, and the Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatiana followed us. I had never imagined in the "happy" days that it would ever be my lot to traverse this corridor with a breaking heart, or under such conditions. For ten years I had received nothing but affection from the Imperial Family—I had watched the children grow up, I had been their playmate and their friend—now I had to leave them in hostile and menacing surroundings.

Russia had already deprived them of their Imperial state, their possessions and their liberty: surely she might not have deprived them of their friends!

We walked slowly towards the head of the great staircase . . . the moment for saying farewell had arrived . . . I tried to be brave . . . the silence was unbroken save by Tatiana's stifled sobbing. Olga and the Empress were quite calm, but Tatiana, who has been described by most contemporary historians as proud and reserved, made no secret of her grief.

Two soldiers were waiting on the staircase . . . the little group of the Imperial Family stopped, and surrounded me . . . then all pretence of self-control vanished. We clung together, but our unavailing tears made no impression on hearts harder than the marble staircase on which we stood.

"Come . . . Madame . . ." said one of the soldiers, seizing me by the arm.

I turned to the Empress. With a tremendous

effort of will, she forced herself to smile reassuringly; then, in a voice whose every accent bespoke intense love and deep religious conviction, she said: "Lili, by suffering we are purified for Heaven. This good-bye matters little—we shall meet in another world."

The soldiers hurried me down the staircase, but I stopped half-way, and looked back. The Imperial Family was still where I had left them; with a rough gesture, my guards motioned me to descend. I could see my beloved Empress no longer.

I walked to the door of the second entrance where some officers and soldiers stood, laughing and talking. Two automobiles were waiting outside. It was bitterly cold, and a bleak wind howled round the Palace, and drove the snow in stinging dust against my face as I sat in the open automobile waiting for Anna. At last she appeared; she looked ghastly, and her eyes were swollen with crying. Two officers sat facing us, and a third took his place beside the chauffeur. In this manner we saw the last of Tsarkoe Selo . . . but I had left my heart behind.

We proceeded rapidly towards the private station, where the automobile stopped. I walked quickly inside. I held myself erect . . . I would *not* let our enemies think that I knew the meaning of the word FEAR. As I passed, some of the soldiers sneered . . . "See how haughty she is," they remarked; but I took no notice.

The Imperial train was waiting, and the thought flashed across my mind that the Revolutionaries were surely most inconsistent people,



since Kerensky & Co. did not scruple to avail themselves of the luxuries appertaining to Imperial state. Anna and I made our way to the drawing-room compartment, where we seated ourselves—I say “ourselves,” but, in reality, Anna was lying half fainting on a chair. I could just see the Palace through the window of the saloon, and I looked at nothing else until the train moved out of the station, and, even then, my straining eyes sought the familiar building which held so much that was dear to me.

Suddenly I became aware that someone was shouting, and thumping on the floor with a stick. I withdrew from the window to see what was the matter, and I encountered the angry gaze of Kerensky.

“Look here . . . you’d better listen when I’m talking to you,” he raged.

I simply looked at him. Nobody had ever addressed me in such a manner! I am a tall woman; perhaps my height (I towered above him) and my unspoken contempt made him think better of continuing in this strain.

“I merely wanted to tell you that I am taking you to the prison of the Palais de Justice,” said Kerensky. “From there you will be transferred (with deep meaning) *somewhere else*, and *that* will be the actual place of your imprisonment.”

I still looked through him, and he beat a retreat into his own compartment. Ten minutes later we were at Petrograd!

The A.D.C.’s made Anna go first; I followed and as we walked down the train we passed through the saloon where Kerensky and another

man were stretched out comfortably in the Emperor's easy chairs ! When Kerensky saw me he sat up, and looked me up and down with a kind of half-fierce curiosity. I returned his appraising glance with one of disdain . . . the next moment Anna and I were told to get into a closed carriage (another relic of Imperialism), and we drove away in the company of the A.D.C.'s—mere boys—who were evidently keenly interested in us both.

I was horrified at the change which the Revolution had wrought in Petrograd. Its quiet, well-bred look had completely disappeared, it wore the aspect of a person just recovering from a drunken bout. Red flags were everywhere, and crowds of unrestful people were waiting in long queues outside the bakers' shops. This sight roused Anna from her lethargy of grief, and, childish as ever, she remarked, quite happily, " Well, Lili, it's no better *after* the Revolution than it was before." I silenced her further criticisms with a glance at the A.D.C.'s, and I felt quite relieved when our carriage sank first in one, and then in another of the dirty heaps of snow which cumbered the streets, and which had not been removed by the road sweepers. No policemen were visible ; law and order had ceased to exist, but groups of odd-looking people hung about at the corners of the streets. These loungers were unmistakably Jews. . . . The Ghetto-like appearance of Petrograd was amply accounted for.

The carriage stopped outside the Palais de Justice, and we were conducted down seemingly endless corridors to a room on the fourth floor.

This room was empty, save for two easy chairs, a small chair and a table on which stood a carafe of cold water. The aides-de-camp told us to ask the sentinels for anything we wanted, and they were about to leave us alone when I said to one of them : " Will you try and let my servants know that I'm here ? "

" Impossible," he answered, " but in your next prison you'll be allowed to see your friends once a week." The young men then went away, and Anna at once began to cry. I tried to console her, but I was completely worn out—my powers of endurance had snapped, since there was no one to be brave for !

The room was bitterly cold, and we huddled together, wondering what next would happen. Suddenly shots rang out in the corridor . . . were they harbingers of death ? The firing was followed by coarse laughter, and a soldier ran into our room. " Ah . . . ha ! . . . ha !! . . . he mocked, " were you afraid . . . did you think you were going to be killed ? \*

As I sat in the cheerless room, thinking over many things, I suddenly remembered that Anna had a great predilection for carrying letters and photographs about with her—my heart sank—supposing that she had done so now ?

" Anna," I said, trying to speak lightly, " what papers have you brought away with you ? "

" Oh, lots, Lili," answered Anna. " I've some letters of the Empress, some letters from Gregory, and two photographs of him."

\* General Knox was discussing certain matters with Kerensky at the moment when this shooting occurred, and he asked Kerensky what the shots signified. " Oh, it's only two friends of the Imperial Family who have just been brought here," answered Kerensky. I met General Knox after my escape to England, and when he related the incident I informed him that I was one of the " two friends."—L. D.



I suppose my expression must have betrayed me. Anna began to whimper. . . . "Oh, Lili, why do you look so grave? Surely they won't treat us badly? What *shall* we do?"

"You must give me every paper in your possession."

She demurred. "But *why*, Lili?"

"Because it's dangerous to retain anything connected either with Her Majesty or with Rasputin. The worst construction is likely to be placed on the most innocent expressions . . . you cannot surely wish to injure the Empress!"

Anna instantly handed over the letters, but the difficulty arose as to how best to destroy them. To burn them was impossible, as we had no stove; I therefore decided to tear the letters up in minute pieces, and throw them down the lavatory which we were permitted to use. In this way, I destroyed what might have been considered "compromising" documents!

After what seemed an interminable time, steps sounded in the corridor, the door was flung open, and Kerensky entered. He deliberately turned his back on Anna, but he surveyed me with the same appraising yet hostile scrutiny. We looked at each other without speaking. . . . At last, he shrugged his shoulders, and remarked to an officer:

"This place is damnably cold. Have the stove seen to immediately."

He left us without another word, and we heard him speaking at some length outside. The sentinels were then changed, and the soldier who was on duty in our room began to talk to me.

"Well, Mademoiselle," he said, "it's ten

thousand pities to see you here . . . you *do* look sad. Whatever have you done? "

" Nothing."

" It's horrible . . . they've no right to arrest young ladies like you."

" Perhaps the new regulations are responsible for our arrest."

" The new regulations ! " The man laughed loudly. " That's a good idea . . . I don't think they'll bring much luck. How can we get on without an Emperor? Don't imagine that *we* wanted this. Do you think we joined willingly? Why, they had to use force to get us . . . we were unarmed, it was no good attempting to resist them."

This kindly soul came from South Russia, and, when I told him who I was and where my estates were situated, he was ready to do anything for me.

" I'm on duty again to-morrow," he said, " so try and write a letter, and I'll see that it's delivered."

Night fell, and we were faint with hunger and fatigue. A little soup was brought us, but we could not swallow it. Every few minutes the door opened, and soldiers came in and made fun of us.

" We've two pretty girls now to look at," they mocked, but their laughter was better than their coarse jokes . . . some of these made me grow scarlet with shame, and I trembled lest their coarseness might become something unspeakable. We wanted to wash . . . but washing was impossible—we had neither jug nor basin—the only water available was that in the carafe.

I opened my suit-case, and as Zanoty had put some cotton-wool and lint with my things I quickly made a pad of some of the wool, and, pouring a little water into the glass, I damped the pad and mopped my face, drying it afterwards with some more cotton wool. At 1 a.m. we were surprised to see the two A.D.C.'s come in with some soldiers. One of the A.D.C.'s addressed Anna.

"Madame . . . we have orders to remove you."

Anna caught hold of my hand. "Oh, Lili, Lili," she moaned, "don't let them take me away. Can't you come with me? . . . I daren't go to another prison without you."

"Cannot you let me accompany Madame Virouboff?" I said.

"The order is for *Madame Virouboff*," replied the A.D.C., and at this moment an officer entered.

"What's all the fuss about?" he demanded. The A.D.C. explained. "What . . . is Madame Virouboff really here?" cried the officer. "Well, I've always wanted to have a look at her . . . which one is it?" The A.D.C. indicated Anna, who was gazing from one to the other with frightened eyes.

"Get up," ordered the officer.

Anna meekly obeyed; as she did so, her crutch was visible.

"But . . . what's wrong?" asked the officer, now evidently greatly astonished.

"I'm a cripple," faltered Anna.

"Good God," exclaimed the officer. He was silent, but he examined Anna much in the same way that a naturalist surveys a prehistoric beast.



He could not reconcile the Anna of reality with the Anna of fiction. In common with many people, not only in Russia, but all the world over, he had imagined a totally different Anna Virouboff. Perhaps he had visualised her as an adventuress of melodrama, a passionate *intrigante*, a subtle schemer, the masterful confidante of a weak Empress !

What did he actually see ?

Rasputin's reputed *sorcière-en-chef* stood before him, a little trembling creature, with the prettiness and the plaintive voice of a child. The officer could not believe his eyes.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are a cripple ?" he stammered.

"I've always used a crutch since my railway accident," she said, helplessly, "I couldn't avoid being in an accident, could I ?"

"Extraordinary, extraordinary," muttered the officer—he was still looking at her—"now, come along." But Anna threw herself on my neck, and refused to leave me. Her sobs were heart-breaking. To do them justice, the soldiers handled this butterfly broken on the wheel very gently. A group of journalists, male and female, all equally unkempt, were busy taking notes, and they glanced half-scornfully and half-pityingly at the shrinking figure of Anna Virouboff as she disappeared in the darkness.

## CHAPTER VI

THE long days passed in their monotonous progress. I no longer seemed to belong to the outside world. I heard nothing, nobody came near me—I was as one dead. But, if my days were monotonous, my nights were full of horror. When darkness fell, and the authorities relaxed their incessant watchfulness, the soldiers became brutish . . . when I say that I dared not fall asleep, some idea may be gathered of my dread! I had never met the eyes of lust until now . . . but it was impossible not to understand the glances of many of the soldiers. And I was not under any false illusions about the morality of freedom, it might surely be called the Freedom of Immorality! I thought of my husband far away in England, of my child lying ill within a short distance of my prison, and of that dear family for whose sakes I would gladly suffer untold misery. Memory opened her book, and I saw within its pages people and scenes which stirred many bitter-sweet recollections in my heart. Once again I walked under the linden trees at Revovka, and listened to the nightingales. I saw the forgotten grave with the wild rose weeping her petal-tears over *la morte amoureuse*; once again I stood in the Winter Garden waiting to see the Empress, sometimes I played with Titi and the Grand Duchesses and heard the Empress's kind voice. The pale face and hypnotic eyes of

Rasputin recalled my pilgrimage. . . . The church towers and houses of Tobolsk rose against the evening sky, the dark and sinister river flowed past me. . . .

Memory turned back more pages of her wonderful book, and I saw the Tsarkoe Selo of yesterday, the sick children, their fragile mother, and the Emperor, to whom Destiny had proved so cruel.

I endeavoured to preserve a calm mental outlook, it was useless. . . . I wondered whether escape might be possible, but my room was situated on the fourth floor, I dared not risk the descent from the window. One idea obsessed me. I *must* see Kerensky, and this idea grew more intense when I heard that I was shortly to be removed to another prison. "They are making enquiries about you," said the A.D.C.

"Well, I want you to do something, and inform the Minister Kerensky that I would like to see him."

The A.D.C. was evidently startled by my request.

"Hm . . . I'll do my best, but—" his gesture was significant of the hopelessness of such a request.

Upon his return, the A.D.C. said tersely:

"I've seen about your affair, but Kerensky sleeps; he has just dined."

"Will you ask him to see me when he awakes?"

"Yes. . . ." Again the significant gesture.

I waited impatiently. I felt that this interview with Kerensky would prove the critical point in my present desperate situation. I paced up and down the room, and my nervous agitation



aroused the pity of one of the soldiers, who remarked kindly :

“ Poor young lady ! You *do* seem worried ! ”

Three hours passed. . . . They seemed like centuries, and then the A.D.C. entered.

“ The Minister will receive you,” he said.

I hastily arranged my sadly crumpled Red Cross uniform, and two soldiers with fixed bayonets stationed themselves on either side of me. The A.D.C. led the way down endless stairs and lengthy corridors. At last we halted before a half-open door, and, as I stood there, I smelt the delicate fragrance of roses. Surely no roses grew in this terrible prison soil ? But the perfume was unmistakable, and I was not left long to wonder from whence it proceeded.

I was ushered into a large, well-furnished reception room, formerly occupied by some Minister under the Empire, and on a table stood an enormous basket of blood-red roses. On another table was a basket of scarlet carnations, the warm air was heavy with the mingled odours of roses and clove pinks. So the Ministers of the Revolution were able to indulge their taste for roses in March, whilst the Sons of Freedom clamoured in the snow for bread !

The door at the extreme end of the room was ajar ; presently it opened, and Kerensky came in. He glanced at me, walked to the writing-table, where he seated himself, and indicated a place for me.

KERENSKY : “ Well, what do you want. You asked to see me ? ”

MYSELF : “ I want to ask you why I am under arrest. I have never meddled in politics,

they are the last things that interest me. I can't regard myself as a political prisoner."

KERENSKY (taking a roll of paper off the desk, and perusing it): "Listen. . . . Firstly, you are accused of staying voluntarily with Their Majesties when you had no official position at Court. Can you deny this?"

MYSELF: "Certainly not, I have no wish to do so. I stayed with Their Majesties, as I could not possibly desert them at such a moment. I love the Imperial Family as individuals. Surely this cannot constitute a crime in your eyes."

KERENSKY: "Well . . . let it pass. . . . What is this close friendship between you and the Empress?"

MYSELF: "I am honoured with the friendship of the Empress. She knows my husband, she has been so good to us that we cannot be devoted enough to her."

KERENSKY (impatiently): "Enough of the Empress. What do you want?"

MYSELF: "What I ask is *not* freedom, but imprisonment in my own house. My child is ill. I want to be with him."

KERENSKY (laughing satirically): "You didn't consider your child when you left him alone in Petrograd in order to remain with your beloved Empress."

MYSELF (angrily): "I know best *why* I left him. You call yourself a patriot . . . I suppose you put the love of your country before family ties? I love the Imperial Family, they come before my family ties. You've taken me away from *them*—I haven't gone willingly. Why deprive me of my child?"

KERENSKY (with sinister emphasis) : " Listen, Madame Dehn, *you know too much*. You have been constantly with the Empress since the beginning of the Revolution. You can, if you choose, throw quite another light on certain happenings which we have represented in a different aspect. You're DANGEROUS."

A long silence.

KERENSKY : " Can you explain why all orders from the Empress passed through you? You had no official position . . . it's a most suspicious occurrence."

MYSELF : " We were practically isolated in the private apartments through fear of contagion. Besides, what orders could the Empress give without their being known to *you* ? "

KERENSKY : " The servants are witnesses that all orders came through you. Enquiries will reveal the truth . . . if you are honest . . . well and good. If not . . . that's another matter."

I looked at him. Kerensky seemed absolutely implacable, but I decided to make one last appeal. He apparently loved flowers; this proved that, as his senses could be appealed to, why not his heart?

" If *you* had a child of your own, you'd understand my feelings," I said.

Kerensky surveyed me with that now familiar appraising scrutiny. " I don't think much of you as a mother," he replied, smiling coldly, " but—how old is your child ? "

" He is seven."

" Well, Madame, it so happens that I *have* a child, and he, too, is seven. I can decide nothing, but I am now going to a Council at which Prince Lvoff will be present. *He* must decide."



I looked him straight in the eyes. This time he met my gaze fully and squarely.

"I'm perfectly certain that you can do anything you like, without consulting anyone," I said. This tribute to his vanity appealed at once to Kerensky. With most men vanity is the most powerful factor. Wound a man's vanity and he will never forgive you; pander to it, and he is your friend for life. Kerensky was no exception: I had discovered the heel of this Russian Achilles.

"You are quite right. Of course I can do what I like. Go back to your room—I'll send you my answer later in the evening." He pressed an electric bell on his table. The A.D.C. entered.

"Has Madame Dehn a bed in her room?" asked Kerensky. "If not, see that one is placed there."

"Oh, I don't want a bed," I interrupted. "Please let me go to my child."

"I've already told you," said Kerensky, "that I'll let you know later. But . . . if I allow you to go home, you must give me your written promise not to act in any way against us."

The A.D.C. made a sign to the soldiers, Kerensky took no further notice of me, and I was hurried out of the warm flower-scented apartment into the icy corridor.

Black despair overcame me when I regained my room. Kerensky had been non-committal; but I had hopes that my allusion to him as omnipotent might have some favourable effect; so I sat in the corner nearest the door, straining my ears to catch the sound of approaching footsteps.

Shortly after midnight my friend the A.D.C. made his appearance, and, with a theatrical

gesture, indicative of boundless space, he advanced, saying :

“The Minister grants you permission to go home.”

My feelings are better imagined than described. I sprang up, and made the Sign of the Cross, and my hand sought the beloved medal hidden in my dress. So I was really free ! I could hardly believe it, surely I could not have heard aright !

The A.D.C. told me to put on my hat and cloak and follow him. . . . Before I did so he asked me to sign a paper agreeing not to leave Petrograd, and to hold myself in readiness to be interrogated. I did so ; then, picking up my suit-case, I went downstairs.

He left me in the hall. I had now apparently lost all interest for him, as he did not trouble to bid me farewell. . . . He merely pointed out the door, and disappeared. I looked round, hardly daring to move. I was not able to realize that I was free to go when, and where, I chose. I pushed open the heavy door, and found myself in the cold and darkness outside. Not a single fiacre was in sight ; I felt too exhausted to move, but I made a supreme effort to walk. . . . Impossible ! My feet slipped in all directions in the melted snow and slush of the road. Suddenly I noticed a man who was regarding me with evident curiosity. . . . My heart sank. What if this scrutiny meant that I was about to be re-arrested ?

The man made his way to where I was standing. “Are you Madame Dehn ? ” he enquired civilly.

“I am.”

“I thought I recognised you, Madame. I’ve

been at your house several times. I was formerly Madame Kazarinoff's footman. Poor, poor Madame, who would have believed this could happen to you. Let me help you. I know where I can find a fiacre."

He presently returned with a fiacre, and assisted me to get in with all the courtesy and deference of a well-trained servant. I thanked him many times. . . . He gave the direction to the driver, and we drove away.

It was one in the morning before I arrived home. I rang the bell, and after some delay the door was opened by my maid . . . who nearly fainted when she saw me. . . . I couldn't speak. My thoughts were concentrated on Titi. . . . I ran past her upstairs to his room. . . . It was empty! What had happened—could he be dead? I hurried across the landing to my bedroom. . . . A light was burning. . . . Someone was in bed. . . . Thank God, I recognised the beloved dark head of my boy—he was safe. I fell on my knees beside him. With a little start, and a smile, which was like balm to my yearning heart, Titi awoke. . . .

"Mother, mother. . . ." He flung his arms round me. I covered his face with kisses. "Where have you come from?" he enquired.

"From prison."

The child began to cry. I realized the tactlessness of my reply. "If they ever take you away again I'll go too," he sobbed. "But where's 'Aunt Baby'? What has happened to her? And where is Papa? They say he's been killed."\*

\* I heard later that it was reported that my husband had been killed and his body thrown overboard.



"Darling, darling, I can tell you nothing about Papa."

Hearing the sound of voices, my father now came into the room. He was greatly relieved to know that I was safe, as all sorts of stories were current respecting my fate and that of Anna Virouboff. But my one thought was for my child: he was much better, but the room struck cold, and I asked my father how it was that there was no fire. He shrugged his shoulders. "*Ma chère*," he replied, "the answer is quite simple—we have no wood! The servants manage to steal a little to burn during the day, but at night *c'est bien autre chose*."

I undressed as quickly as possible, and got into bed. I held Titi close. I kissed him passionately. I trembled with mingled joy and fear! . . . No one should separate us. I knew nothing as to our ultimate fate, but I had made up my mind, during these first hours of freedom, to escape as soon as possible to my estates in South Russia, and, if the Imperial Family were removed from Tsarkoe, to join them.

It was a strange home-coming. The whole house was disorganised. The servants were still devoted to my interests, but food and fuel were difficult to obtain. I spent the morning of the next day lying on a couch in my dressing-room. I was really ill; the long strain had told, and Nature was now exacting her toll in the shape of occasional heart attacks. The hours passed peacefully and slowly, but at ten o'clock in the evening the telephone rang, and my maid told me that the Commandant of the Equipage de la Garde wanted to speak to me.

I was surprised and vexed. After the way in which certain officers had treated the Imperial Family, it was not agreeable for me to continue their acquaintance. However, I went to the 'phone.

"Madame Dehn," said a well-known voice, "have you actually come back from the Palace?"

"Yes, I returned to Petrograd a few days ago."

"I heard that you had been placed under arrest. How is it then that you are at home?"

"Kerensky has given me permission to be with Titi. Cannot you, for my husband's sake, and as one of his brother-officers, come over and see me?"

"Impossible," answered the voice. "Look here, you can't stay where you are."

"Very well, since you order, I suppose I must obey. I'll try and find somewhere else, as soon as I am rested."

"You must go now."

"I haven't anywhere to go, and the child is ill."

"Take him to an hotel. I won't be responsible for your safety. Lots of things may happen during the night. . . . The sailors may come and murder you." The Commandant then rang off, and left me to face this new terror. But my mind was made up. I would not leave home at a moment's notice. If we had to die, we would die together. I was too exhausted, and the child was too ill, to contemplate a midnight flight.

I rang up my husband's nephew, who was in barracks, and he promised to keep me well advised; but fortunately the night passed peacefully. Nobody came near the house.

Weeks elapsed, and Kerensky seemed to have completely forgotten my existence. I led a quiet

life, but my heart was torn with anxiety concerning my beloved friends. I received some letters from the Empress, and I wrote constantly to her, and to the Grand Duchesses. It was in connection with this correspondence that I was summoned to Tsarkoe Selo, by order of Commandant Kobilinsky.

I was instructed to leave Petrograd secretly, and to wear my Red Cross uniform. It was early in July, and the trees were bravely apparelled in their young verdure. It was very different to that bleak March afternoon when the snow lay thickly on the ground, and the wind had stung my face with its icy breath. Outwardly, at all events, everything was peaceful, but tears filled my eyes at the recollection of past Julys. . . . Surely God would not permit the innocent to suffer; surely Justice would awaken in the soul of misguided Russia, and all might yet be well.

As I approached the Palace I became sensible of an eerie change, both in it and in its immediate surroundings. I stopped to consider in what the change consisted. Then knowledge dawned upon me. Tsarkoe was a *dead* place. Its windows were almost hidden by the straggling branches of the unclipped trees, grass grew between the stones of its silent courtyard, and I instantly likened it to a famous Russian picture, "Le Chateau Oublié." . . . It was indeed a forgotten castle! I walked to and fro gazing up at the windows, but those within the Palace gave no sign of life. I wanted to call aloud that I was there, but I dared not imperil their safety or my own. I considered even now that I held my life in trust for the service of the Empress. . . . Who knew when she might require me?



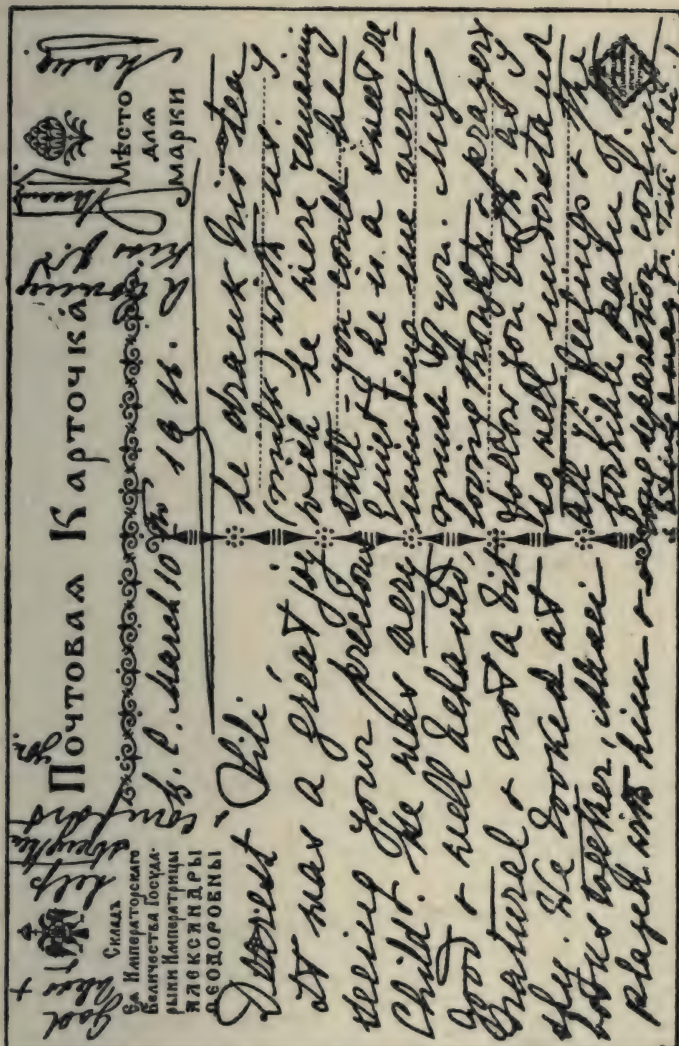
Kobilinsky had taken up his quarters in the large building opposite the Palace, so I repaired thither. There were hardly any people visible, and I was directed to Kobilinsky's private room. He was a dark, shortish, nervous man, wearing military uniform, and, as the Empress had written that he was kind to them, I was naturally anxious to make a good impression. This interview is of some importance as I am enabled to contradict a part of Kobilinsky's deposition which appeared in a recent publication. In this deposition he queries the name of the writer of certain letters

Кансменн  
Рейн Канн  
Матр. Зам.-

Криво угу.  
Благодарю за  
поздравление

Текен  
Такне ипр.

PART OF LETTER FROM HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY WRITTEN  
ON THE DAY OF DEPARTURE FOR SIBERIA.  
(The note in centre is in the handwriting of the Tsarevitch.)



LETTER RECEIVED AT VLADIVOSTOK, IN 1916, WHEN I WAS ON MY WAY TO JAPAN WITH MY HUSBAND. HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY HERE GIVES ME A REPORT OF THE DOINGS OF MY LITTLE SON WHOM I HAD LEFT IN HER CHARGE.

which came to Tsarkoe Selo, and attributes them to quite another person. The actual writer was myself, and the confusion respecting the signature arose from the fact that I had used a fanciful name composed of that of Titi and myself. There was not, and never has been, any "Mysterious Personage" as Kobilinsky's deposition leads one to suppose.

"Are you Madame Dehn?" asked Kobilinsky, eyeing me with some degree of curiosity.

"Yes, Commandant!"

"Are these from you? . . ." he continued, handing me a packet of letters.

"Most certainly. They are all in my handwriting," I said.

"Then why on earth don't you sign your full name when you write?" he queried testily.

"Because I've never been in the habit of doing so. 'Tili' is a fanciful name, a combination of 'Lili' and 'Titi.'"

"I don't believe you," he said bluntly. "It is the name of another lady."

"Why don't you make enquiries if you doubt my word?" I returned. "You'll easily find out that I'm telling the truth."

"Well, well," he grumbled. "I suppose I must believe you. But, see here, Madame, you've got to promise me something. You *must* agree to destroy all the letters which the Empress has sent you. If you don't, I won't allow you to write or to receive any more letters. I suppose," he added, "that such a devoted friend as yourself has not come to-day without bringing some letters for the Family?"

I acknowledged that such was the case.



Kobilinsky smiled, and took the letters. He then signified that the interview was over.

Kobilinsky "passed" many letters to and from the Empress after this, but I was always haunted by the fear lest my precious correspondence might be stolen, or else forcibly destroyed. Fortune favoured me, and an opportunity occurred to send my letters and certain private papers to England under the safe conduct of General Poole. These papers were ultimately deposited in a safe in London belonging to Prince George Shrinky-Shihmatoff.

The Empress and the Grand Duchesses corresponded with me regularly after they left Tsarkoe, in fact up to a few weeks of their departure for Ekaterinburg. These letters were entrusted to confidential persons and smuggled by them out of the prison. Those who expect startling revelations of political importance will be sadly disappointed in these pathetic little leaves which have drifted from Friendship's tree across a passion-racked country, and, like the song, "have found their home" in the heart of a friend. But, for the student of psychology, the just man or woman, the curious seeker "behind the scenes" of Royalty, they will, I think, possess some interest. They will plead for a hearing far more effectively than any poor words of mine. Not one of them contains a sigh for the splendours of a throne. The woman who longed to be in the Crimea at a time of year when the acacias were like "perfumed clouds" made no allusion to the past glories of the Winter Palace, or the comfortable "English" life at Tsarkoe Selo. Perhaps the words of the writer who "being dead

yet speaketh " may serve to efface some of the lies and scandals which have bespattered the name of an Empress who has been condemned so unmercifully.

The Empress and I have never met since that March afternoon when she bade me farewell. I cannot accept the almost overwhelming proofs of the tragedy of Ekaterinburg. From time to time reports of the safety of the Imperial Family have reached us, but the next moment we are faced with evidence that the whole of them have perished. God alone knows the truth, but I still permit myself to hope.

After my interview with Kobilinsky I returned to Petrograd, where I spent some uneventful weeks. Poor Anna was right when she said that things were no better after the Revolution than they were before! Existence was a difficult problem: a period of starvation set in, and we, like others, became familiar with the pangs of hunger. It was impossible to procure nourishing food for Titi; so, almost at my wits' end, I applied for permission to remove him to South Russia.

This permission was most unexpectedly granted. Two weeks later Kerensky's Government fell, and for the moment I was forgotten!

We lived very quietly at Beletskovka, and I was always planning the best way of escape to rejoin my beloved friends. "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose.*" A wave of Bolshevism swept over South Russia, and our safety was menaced to such an extent that I was forced to escape with Titi to Odessa, and, as our adventures in no way touch on the subject of this book, I shall refrain from relating them. Suffice it to say that we managed

to reach Odessa, and from thence, under the protection of the French, we went to Constantinople.

From Constantinople we made our way to Gibraltar, and from Gibraltar to England, where my husband was awaiting me after a three years' separation.

EXTRACT FROM THE LETTER OF 5 JUNE, 1917.

TSARKOE SELO.

Oh! how pleased I am that they have appointed a new Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet (Admiral Raswosoff). I hope to God it will be better now. He is a real sailor and I hope he will succeed in restoring order now. The heart of a soldier's daughter and wife is suffering terribly, in seeing what is going on. Cannot get accustomed and do not wish to. They were such hero soldiers, and how they were spoilt just at a time when it was necessary to start to get rid of the enemy (Germans). It will take many years to fight yet. You will understand how he (Tsar) must suffer. He reads, and tears stand in his eyes (newspapers), but I believe they will yet win (the War). We have so many friends in the fighting line. I can imagine how terribly they must suffer. Of course nobody can write. Yesterday we saw quite new people (new guard)—such a difference. It was at last quite a pleasure to see them. Am writing again what I ought not to, but this does not go by post, or you would not have received it. Of course, I have nothing of interest to write. To-day is a prayer at 12 o'clock. Anastasia is to-day 16 years old. How the time flies. . . .

I am remembering the past. It is necessary to look more calmly on everything. What is to be done? Once He sent us such trials, evidently He thinks we are sufficiently prepared for it. It is a sort of examination—it is necessary to prove that we did not go through it in vain. One can find in everything something good and useful—whatever sufferings we go through—let it be, He will give us force and patience and will not leave us. He is merciful. It is only necessary to bow to His wish without murmur and await—there on the other side He is preparing to all who love Him undescribable joy. You are young and so are our children—how many I have besides my own—you will see better times yet here. I believe strongly the bad will pass and there will be clear



and cloudless sky. But the thunder-storm has not passed yet and therefore it is stifling—but I know it will be better afterwards. One must have only a little patience—and is it really so difficult? For every day that passes quietly I thank God. . . .

Three months have passed now (since Revolution)! The people were promised that they would have more food and fuel, but all has become worse and more expensive. They have deceived everybody—I am so sorry for them. How many we have helped, but now it is all finished. . . .

It is terrible to think about it! How many people depended on us. But now? But one does not speak about such things, but I am writing about it because I feel so sadly about those who will have it more difficult now to live. But it is God's will! My dear own, I must finish now. Am kissing you and Titi most tenderly. Christ be with you.

"Most hearty greetings"—(from the Czar).

Yours loving,  
AUNT BABY.

---

30th July, 1917.  
TSARKOE SELO.

MY DEAREST,

Heartiest thanks for letter of the 21st. Cannot write—he has no time to read ("he"—Colonel Kobilinsky, Revolutionary Commandant of the Palace), the poor man is so busy all the time that he is often without lunch and dinner. Am pleased have made his acquaintance. E. S. has seen you ("E. S."—Doctor Botkin). I am so pleased that you know all about us.

Will remember your last year's trip. Do you remember? Have not been quite well lately—often had head and heart-ache. My heart was enlarged. Am sleeping very badly. But never mind—God gives me His strength. Have brought the ikon of Snameni (of God Mother). How thankful I am that this was possible, at this day dear to me (birthday of Tsarevitch). I prayed hard for you and remembered how we used to pray together before it. How Tina (Anna Virouboff) will now suffer—without anybody in the town and her sister in Finland and her friends going so far away (meaning herself)—how much people have to suffer—the path of life is so hard. Please write to A. W. (Colonel Siroboyarski—one of the wounded officers) and send him heartfelt greetings and



[illegible]



blessings ✠ — kiss you most tenderly and the darling Titi (my son). God preserve you and the Holy Mother.

Always yours,

AUNT BABY.

Kindest regards (meaning the Czar).

I remember—Faith, Hope, Love—that is all, all in life. You understand my feelings. Be brave. Thank you most

Уважаю и люблю.  
 Дарю Вас Маму  
 Духовную и  
 физическую и  
 обаяние  
 Графини Бастион.  
 А. А. А.

Спасибо за дорогие  
 вещицы — мамин  
 дух и физический — спасибо  
 за подарки. Ваш  
 император, + — баба.

PART OF LETTER OF 30TH JULY, 1917.

(Day of removal from Tsarkoe Selo to Tobolsk. The upper portion is written by the Grand Duchess Olga, the postscript is in the handwriting of Her Imperial Majesty.)

heartily. All touched by your little ikons—will just put it on. Ask Rita (Miss Hitrovo) to write to the mother of your countryman (Colonel Siroboyarski).

Added by Tsarevitch:

Kiss you most tenderly. Thanks for congratulations.

ALEXEI.

Added by Grand Duchess Olga :

I also kiss you most tenderly and thank you Lili my heart, for post card, and little ikon. God preserve you.

OLGA.

Added by the Empress :

Thank you for your dear letters—we understand each other. It is hard to be separated. Greetings to R. Gor. ✠ I have learnt only now how you spent the first days (in prison). It is terrible, but God will reward. Am pleased that your husband has written.

29th November, 1917.

TOBOLSK.

MY DEAREST,

I am for such a very, very long time without news of you, and I feel sad. Have you received my post card of the 28th October ?



Кажу буда десни  
Босподня  
Разсыпая мир и по  
То ангели Божьи сего  
проходят над  
спящей землей

Дорогой Тили

5.XII.17.

CHRISTMAS CARD DRAWN SPECIALLY FOR ME  
BY HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY WHILE AT TOBOLSK.

Everybody is well—my heart is not up to much, fit at times, but on the whole it is better.

I live very quietly and seldom go out as it is too difficult to breathe in frozen air.

Lessons as usual. (News from Petrograd) "T" is as always. Zina has been to see her and O. V., who is very sad, she is always praying. Father Makari passed on on the 19th July.

Rumours have it that Gariainoff has married, but we do not know whether it is true. (Speaking of herself the Empress writes) Aunt Baby drew this herself. How is Titi?—Granny—I want to know such, such a lot. How is Count Keller? Have you seen him in Kharkoff? The present events are so awful for words, shameful and almost funny, but God is merciful, darling. Soon we shall be thinking of those days you passed with us. My God, what remembrances!

Matresha has married, they are now all in P., but the brother is at the front.

I read a lot, embroider and draw (I have to do it all with my spectacles, am so old). I think of you often and always pray fervently for you and love you tenderly.

I kiss you very, very much.

May Christ protect you.

Your countryman is at Vladivostok and Nicholas Jakovlevitch (one of the wounded) is, I think, also in Siberia. I am so lonely without you all. Where is your husband and his friends? We are still expecting Ysa and the others.

I kiss Titi tenderly. Write, I am waiting so. Verveine (toilet water) always reminds me of you.

---

2/15 March, 1918.

TOBOLSK.

MY OWN DEAR DARLING,

Best and tender thanks for your dear letter. At last we have received good news from you; it was an anxious time not to hear for so long, knowing that things are bad where you are living. I can imagine though what terrible mental agony you must be going through, and you are alone. My little godchild (Titi) is with you always—what he must see and hear! It is a hard school. My God, how sorry I am for you my little giant one; you have always been so brave. I think of those days of a year ago. I shall never forget that you were everything to me and believe that God will not



leave you or forsake you. You left your son for "Mother" (meaning herself) and her family, and great will your reward be for this.

Thank God that your husband is not with you, for it would have been terrible, but not to know anything about him is more than awful. When I did not know for four days where mine was "then" (during the days of the Revolution), but what was that in comparison with you. But for us, in general, it is better and easier than for others—it hurts not to be with all our dear ones and not to be able to share their troubles. Yes, separation is a dreadful thing, but God gives strength to bear even this, and I feel the Father's presence near me and a wonderful sense of peaceful joy thrills and fills my soul (Tina feels the same), and one cannot understand the reason for it, as everything is so unutterably sad, but this comes from Above and is beside ourselves, and one knows that He will not forsake His own, will strengthen and protect.

Have news at last, two received new from K. ; poor thing, she has a new sorrow, has buried her beloved father—her mother is with her. It is not easy for her to stay in town, though she has good friends and is not so cut off as you are, dearest. Be careful of certain of your friends—they are dangerous.

If you see dear Count Keller again, tell him that his ex-Chief (meaning herself) sends him her heartiest greeting (to her as well), and tell him that she prays constantly for him. I am anxious to know whether he has any news of his eldest son. Radionoff and his brother are in Kieff. I hear that Gariainoff and his wife have been in Gagra and are now—so they say—at Rostoff. Am anxious about them, all last week have been *worrying* over it, and do not know why.

To-day we have 20 degrees of frost, but the sun is warm and we have already had real spring days. Godmother (meaning herself) does all the housekeeping now, looks through books and accounts—a lot to do, quite a real housewife. Everybody is well—only a few colds, and feet ached, not very badly, but enough to keep from walking. They have all grown, Marie is now much thinner, the fourth is stout and small. Tatiana helps everyone and everywhere, as usual ; Olga is lazy, but they are all one in spirit. They kiss you tenderly—(stands for the Emperor) sends his hearty greetings. They are already sunburnt, they work hard, sew and cut wood, or we should have none. The court is full of timber, so we shall have enough to last.







We still are not allowed to go to church. A. V.'s mother (one of the Empress's wounded) is very sorry that you have not been to see her. She is living with some relatives of your mother's. Their estate has been taken away from them. The son has returned, he now looks, as they all do, pale and miserable.

They, poor things, can no longer keep M. S., and will probably be obliged soon to leave the house. She hardly ever gets a letter from her son; he too is complaining, so I copy what they write to me and send it on to them.

He is very upset not to hear from you, though he himself has written to you. He is going to Japan to learn English, he learnt more than 900 words in ten days and of course overtired himself and has been feeling ill. He was operated upon in December, in Vladivostok. Rita writes that Nicholas Jakovlevitch (one of the wounded) is at Simferopol with his friend, the brother of little M. Their splendid (good) friend (Alexandre Dumbadze) has been killed there, we loved him very much, he was one of our wounded.

I only write what I dare, for in the present days one never knows in whose hands the letter might fall. We hope to do our devotions next week if we are allowed to do so. I am already looking forward to those beautiful services—such a longing to pray in church. I dream of our church (at Tsarkoe Selo) and of my little cell-like corner near the altar. Nature is beautiful, everything is shining and brilliantly lighted up. The children are singing next door. There are no lessons to-day as it is Friday of Carnival week.

I relive in mind, day by day, through the year that has passed and think of those I saw for the last time. Have been well all along, but for the past week my heart has been bad and I do not feel well, but this is nothing. We cannot complain, we have got everything, we live well, thanks to the touching kindness of the people, who in secret send us bread, fish, pies, etc.

Do not worry about us, darling, dearly beloved one. For you all it is hard and especially for our Country!!! This hurts more than anything else—and the heart is racked with pain—what has been done in one year! God has allowed it to happen—therefore it must be necessary so that they might understand, that eyes might be opened to lies and deceptions.

I cannot read the newspapers quietly, those senseless telegrams—and with the German at the door!!!

K. and everyone else looks at "brother" as a saviour—Great God, to what have they come to, to wait for the enemy to come and rid them from the infernal foe. And who is sent as the leader? Aunt Baby's brother (meaning herself). Do you understand. They wished to act nicely, probably thinking that it would be less painful and humiliating to her—but for her (meaning herself) it is far worse—such an unbearable pain—but everything generally hurts now—all one's feelings have been trampled underfoot—but so it has to be, the *soul* must grow and rise above all else; that which is most dear and tender in us has been wounded—is it not true? So we too have to understand through it all that God is greater than everything and that He wants to draw us, through our sufferings, closer to Him. Love Him more and better than one and all. But my country—my God—how I love it, with all the power of my being, and her sufferings give me actual physical pain.

And who makes her (Russia) suffer, who causes blood to flow? . . . her own sons. My God, what a ghastly horror it all is. And who is the enemy? This cruel German, and the worst thing for Aunt Baby is that he (the enemy) is taking away everything as in the time of Tsar Alexsei Michailovich (meaning that frontiers of Russia would become again as during the reign of A. M.). But I am convinced that it will not remain so, help will come from Above, people can no longer do anything, but with God all things are possible, and He will show His strength, wisdom and all forgiveness and love—only believe, wait and pray.

This letter will, in all probability, reach you on the day of our parting (one year ago), it seems so near and yet again as if centuries had passed since then.

It is seven months that we have been here. We see Ysa\* only through the windows, and Madeleine (the Empress's lady's-maid, Madeleine Zanotti) too. They have been here for three or four months to-day, I am told. I must give that letter at once.

I kiss you and Titi tenderly, Christ be with you, my dearest ones. Greeting to Mother and Grandmother. The children kiss and love you, and he (the Emperor) sends his very best wishes.

YOUR OLD GODMOTHER.

\*Baroness Büxhoeven Lady-in-waiting to the Empress.

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Dehn, (Madame) Lili  
The real Tsaritsa



